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No. 58
April 1998

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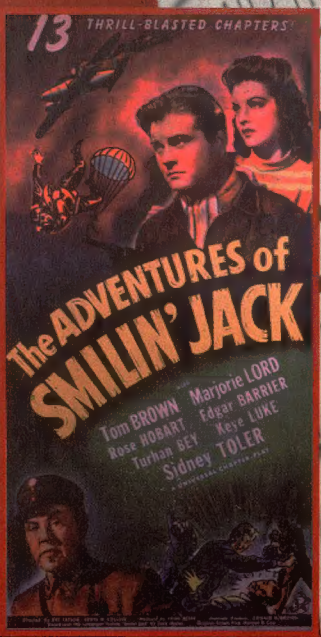

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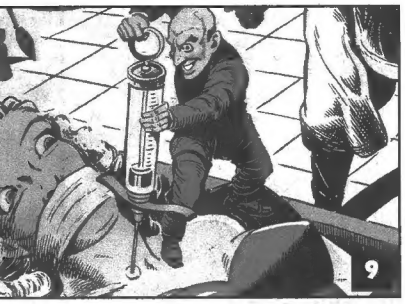

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Issue Number #58, April 1998

ON THE COVER:
A close-up of the magnificent Spiegle art used as the cover of the 16th issue of Space Family Robinson (Apr 1966). © Western Publishing

Wonder at Our Folly

There's several things I'd like to talk over with you this month, so I'll get right to it. First, the price of *CBM* is going up a buck next month (with issue #59). Increased production costs combined with reduced advertising is the primary cause. We considered a number of things to try to avoid an increase, including using a lower quality uncoated stock, lowering the page count, and even eliminating the color section. All of these options seemed more egregious to me than a price increase. I hope you agree, and I also hope you think we're worth the extra dollar. (On a positive note, our subscription service will not go up, providing some savings (albeit slight) over the newsstand price.

Second, a number of you have written in to express your concern about the Neal Adams reprint in *CBM* #56. I feel like my motives were noble… that is trying to reduce the possibility that thousands of *CBM* readers would have to pay what I felt were clearly "excessive" prices for back issues of *CBM* #40. Although the idea seems to have worked in some areas, my effort apparently didn't sit well with several long-time readers. If you are in that camp, please accept my apology, along with a personal guarantee that extensive reprints will not grace the pages of *CBM* in the future, and will be delegated to a completely separate publication (perhaps a *CBM* yearbook or the like). Look for more on this in future issues.

The third area I'd like to talk about is the passing of industry great Archie Goodwin (something that has occupied my thoughts of late). As many of you know, one of the primary items on the *CBM* agenda is to try to shine the spotlight on pioneering comic book creators and provide some of the recognition they so truly deserve. Such was the case with Archie Goodwin. We were planning a CBM Tribute to the prolific, friendly, and well-respected creator when he unexpectedly and tragically passed away the very day before the interview.

Like many greats of comic history before him, the passing of Archie Goodwin is yet another example of an irretrievable piece of history that is lost forever… without being completely researched and chronicled (just look at the number who have left us in the last few years). Centuries from now, future historians and collectors may well look back and wonder at our folly… asking how collectors during the first four decades of fandom let so much history slip through their fingers. And the tragedy will be repeated again and again unless every fan redoubles their effort to talk with, interview, and chronicle the lives of older creators before they leave this world. There are still so many deserving greats that have yet to receive their rightful moment in the limelight and the history books.

I realize that all of you who regularly buy *CBM* are already making a financial commitment to support this kind of endeavor. But if you can, try to make the extra effort to contact a comic book pioneer and take steps to get them on audio tape (or better yet, video tape) thus ensuring their personal record of history is recorded for posterity.

Archie's passing reminds all of us who are serious about the importance of comic history that we are the last generation that can make personal contact with the first generation of industry pioneers. If there is someone you know that you think might make a good candidate for a *CBM* article, write or call and let's see if we can get their story into the pages of *CBM*. Please don't wait… time really is running out.

Gary

Gary M. Carter, Editor

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Perturbed

I've been enjoying CBM regularly for over two years now, but I've been somewhat disappointed by the number of reprint articles in the last two CBM issues (#55, 56). It's not that I am against reprints. Heck, the Golden Age of comics came to life again in the 1960s because of reprints and many were introduced to the treasures of the Silver Age through reprints in the 1970s. However, I would encourage you to follow the same guidelines that DC did in picking reprints. It was generally held that the comics audience substantially turned over every five years. Therefore, DC tended to only reprint stories that had originally seen print over five years previous.

Holding to this theory, your reprints of articles such as "Protecting Ownership of a Legend" (from CBM #20) from the original run of CBM would be fine. But articles such as "An Origin Trilogy" (from CBM #27) and "Neal Adams: the DC Years" (from CBM #40) should be let to rest for a while. Both of these articles especially bother me for different reasons. I just recently found a copy of CBM #27 and had only a month or two previously read this article. These days CBM back issues are still available in many comic shops and in this case you are still selling copies of CBM #27 direct. As for the Neal Adams article, I am perturbed by it because it originally saw print only a year and a half ago and because it took over half of the issue (you even reprinted the same color cover gallery when there are so many great pieces you could have showcased). If demand for CBM #40 was really so high, why couldn't you have simply reprinted the issue and shipped it out as restock?

The other question remains is, why are you reprinting at all? Is there a cost crunch or a do you truly lack material to fill the pages? If the former is the case, I'd rather see a price increase and a maintenance of new material. If the later is the case, why don't you make an appeal for interested parties to submit articles. If truly encouraged, I would certainly make the effort to write a few articles.

Alright, now that I have gotten that out of my system, I have a question about one of the articles in CBM #56. The article on Shadow comics is dubbed as Part 2. What happened to Part I? Was it ever printed? If so, when? It would have been helpful if a note as to when Part I had appeared was attached to the article.

Give my continued support to Michelle Nolan and Pat Calhoun for their consistently excellent articles.

Mark Billian, via Email

Part I of the Shadow article was published in CBM #28, which has regrettably been sold out for quite some time now. As for reprints, I've gone back to the drawing board...

Tower Comics

Have just recently discovered your magazine and find it most enjoyable. Have you done any articles about Tower comics? If so, in which back issue will I find it? If not, how about it? I have recently started trying to fill in my collection and reread several issues of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. I discovered that these books are full of neat stuff:

Terrific artwork by Ditko, Wood, Kane and Crandall. Quirky, very flawed heroes. Loopy villains.... Everything the aging fanboy (or girl) could desire! And I realized that I knew diddly about the company. Searching around I uncovered almost no information at all. Very curious.

Brian Defer, via Email

I've been searching for a number of years now for the definitive and complete Tower Comics article... but to no avail. Can anyone help?

Paul Gambaccini Writes

Congratulations on your continued fine work with CBM. Issue #57 was another winner. I devoured Bill Jenks' authoritative article "Investing In EC," particularly since I was an active participant at the very Christie's auction of which he was writing. I believe he is absolutely right. The EC line was the high water mark of comics in terms of quality, and many of its titles are hilariously undervalued compared to superhero books. Of course I am not one to argue with the law of supply and demand. Indeed, it has worked in my favour in the sense that I have

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been able to afford quite a few Gaines copies. But when the results of the law of supply and demand are contrasted to relative contributions to the culture, the comparison is hilarious. That a person could buy a Gaines run of all 23 issues of MAD for less than a More Fun #52 is one of those curiosities of collecting that will keep Bill Jenks and Matt Schiffman reporting on the harmless insanity of our hobby for as long as they want to keep their printers in ink.

I'm not at all surprised to see Bill's graph of total comic sales each year from 1937-70., with the peak period 1950-55. A very good case can be made that this was the best time to be a comic reader. Carl Barks was at his best with Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge stories. John Stanley was producing Little Lulu and Sheldon Mayer Scribbly (thanks for reproducing the Scribbly #12 cover in a recent Michelle Nolan column; it's one of my all-time favourites). EC gave us the best science-fiction and best horror comics ever published, and Harvey Kurtzman was at peak with his three titles. Will Eisner was concluding his run on The Spirit and briefly turning the weekly over to Wally Wood. And, Kirby fans, there may not have been a Marvel universe, but here was Boys' Ranch, one of the greatest S&K titles. DC was producing not only Mayer's Scribbly but Alex Toth's breathtaking Johnny Thunder in All-American Western. In short, the quality was there—it just wasn't in the hero books that Bill Jenks reminds us are favored by collectors. It was thrilling to see recognition at last for Curt Swan. I almost feel as if CBM #57 marks his final acceptance by fans in what we might call the Legion of Super-Artists. Here's another example of how generous this man was. At this moment, I am looking at a pencil drawing he made for me in 1964. His son, Chris, was in my school, and at my (I now realize) cheeky request Curt drew for me facial renderings of Superman, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, Perry White, Superboy, Lana Lang, Supergirl, Mystplk, and —Curt Swan. I don't have to tell you that I have cherished this piece ever since.

I must also report how much I loved Pat S. Calhoun's article on Mac Raboy's Captain Marvel Jr. I had always loved Raboy's ability to communicate joy and his talent for making basically nonsensical situations look realistic, but I had never collected Fawcetts. After this article, I had to buy the "D" copy of a Master Comics with a Raboy CM Jr. cover from Harley Yee at a London mart.

Having obtained this beautiful pedigree book, I expressed to Harley my theory that we should inaugurate the hobby's first negative pedigree, the "Double D" collection. Holders of these books are those true unfortunates who had the bad luck to buy Silver Age books from a certain New York state dealer about a decade ago. These suckers, of whom I was a prime example, know who they are. Their books were tampered with in a variety of unpleasant ways, most notably trimming. Some were stamped "File Copy" even though Marvel didn't have file copies. The collection became so notorious it really does deserve the declaration of a negative pedigree. Imagine how my joy at acquiring beautiful copies of Amazing Fantasy #15, Showcase #4, Amazing Spider-Man #2 and #4, and other books turned to horror when I discovered a couple of years later they literally didn't measure up to the originals!

I called these offenses upon defenseless Silver Age keys Crimes Against Comics, at which point the young British fan Paul Lonsdale suggested a suitable punishment. The culprit, whose name we all know but cannot speak, would be cleaned and pressed, color touched, and then trimmed on three sides!

It is a great shame that Silver Age books, of which I have such fond personal memories, seem to have borne the brunt of unstated restoration. After buying the above and (what I later discovered to be) tampered-with copies of Brave and Bold #28 and #29, Daredevil #1 and Showcases #2, #4 (again) and #6, it's no wonder I shifted the emphasis of my collecting to ECs and Barks.

Keep up the wonderful work.

Paul Gambaccini, London, England

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Glorious Technicolor

Just finished (sigh!) reading the eight back issues I recently ordered from you, and I really can't help telling you how I enjoyed them all.

The articles I enjoyed most were: The ones about "The Atomic Genre," by Pat Calhoun, Michelle Nolan and R. Beerbohm (#46); everything about horror comics (my favorite genre from my childhood, in the early '50s); the Russ Heath interview, by Roger Hill (#47); the Nick Cardy one, by John Coates (#48); of course, all the pieces about the legendary Julius Schwartz (in #50, 51 & 52); the articles about "Space Cabbie," by Michelle Nolan, and "Capt. Comet," by M. Tiefenbacher (both in #50); the (fabulous) Al Williamson coverture in #51, by S. Ringgenberg; the "Olga Mesmer" article, by Will Murray (same ish); the splendid San Diego Con photos of the Living Legends (same ish); the complete info about that phenomenal character of Archie (#52), and... the piece de resistance, #53, the last of the run, and also the best in my opinion, with those gems that I absolutely feel compelled to detail one by one: "Last Gasps!," by Pat Calhoun; "Four Color Frights of '52," by same author; "The Boy of Steel," by Michelle Nolan; "Al Feldstein," by Andrew T. Lee; "E.C. Ace of Arts," by Andy Lee; "D.C. Tangled Roots," by Will Murray; "The Forgotten Jungle Queen," by Nicky Wright; "Witches Tales" (by the way, one of my favorite mags of all times, the very first horror comic I knew–and enjoooyyeeed–), by Mike Howlett, and "New Fun," by J. Berk.

Wow! As I put in the "subject" line, a succulent banquet indeed!! And what a dessert! Those pulp and comic covers in GLORIOUS TECHNICOLOR!! What can an old comic buff say, but "THANKS, FELLOWS!!"?

May 1998 be the happiest and most successful year for you all! Keep up the good work!

A friendly handshake.

Carlos M. Federici, Uruguay

No online credit

The Archie article on the Gemstone CBM website was excellent, but you didn't give an author credit! Thirty days of staying after school and cleaning the blackboards for you!

Lou Mougin, Texas

We deserve at least 60 days of detention for such an inexcusable and egregious omission! To set the record straight, the authors were Jeff Branch and Paul Castiglia. We'll make sure our web site Guru back at the home office claps a few erasers too!

Very Suspicious

I am very concerned about the Overstreet Update enclosed with CBM #54. My particular concern is the inclusion of Atlas pre-Code horror in the update itself, in the overall price reductions assigned these lower grade Atlas pre-Code horror books, and the complete lack of explanation of why these Atlas pre-Code horror books took a price hit in the "lower" grades (if you can call a true Fine Atlas pre-Code a lower grade book).

Now don't get me wrong. I am solely a collector, specializing almost exclusively in Atlas pre-Code horror. I am always happy when books I want are more affordable. I am also, however, very suspicious when I see across-the-board price scaling with highly sought after books that are fairly difficult to find in even GD with decent paper. I am further puzzled with the handling of DC books listed in the Update. DC titles like Strange Adventures are listed not with #1 but when the Code came in. Yet, the Atlas Strange Tales and Journey into Mystery titles both are listed with issue #1 (well into pre-Code). The implied concept that these pre-Code Atlas horror books have any relationship whatsoever to, for example, a Strange Tales #130 or a Journey Into Mystery #121 or a Thor #138 is questionable at best. I would love to know how many dealer reports of every specific Atlas pre-Code book listed were made and how a meaningful price cut was determined.

For example, precisely how many copies each of, say, Strange Tales #3 in GD, FN and NM or precisely how many copies of Journey Into Mystery #6 in GD, FN and NM were actually reported by dealers? Further, every market report I have read this past year has indicated that pre-Code horror, in any condition, has been highly sought after, and Atlas has always been specified as among the most most desirable. The lack of any mention of pre-Code horror in the editorials and the apparent formula approach the Update took in making generic percentage cuts across the Atlas pre-Code board has made it very apparent that this reporting is open to question. Guides should be reporting trends, not creating them.

I will leave it up to another collector to address the same situation concerning the pre-hero Marvels. All I will say on that topic is I just acquired a Marvel Tales #116 (July 1953) with a story titled "Werewolf by Night." Could this be a rare pre-Code prototype issue? (nudge nudge, wink wink).

Michael Spampinato, Massachusetts

Kind of a rip?

Great mag, but wasn't #56 kind of a rip with reprint material from #40??!! Otherwise, I love this publication and look forward to its monthly arrival.

Thomas Miller, Pennsylvania

Sigh...

(Continued on page 76)

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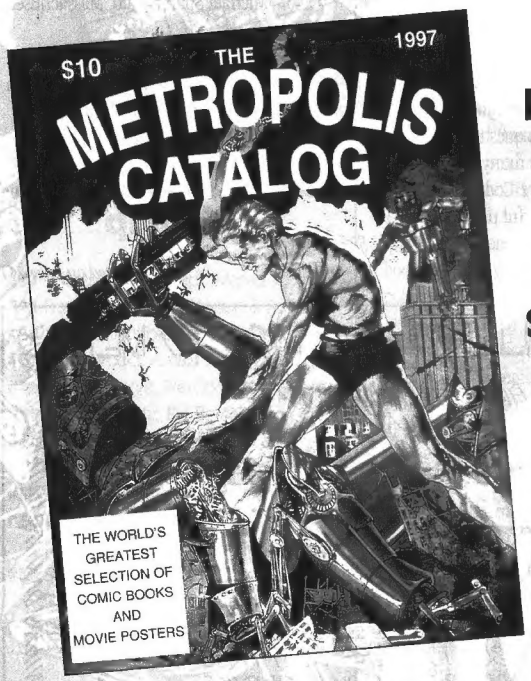

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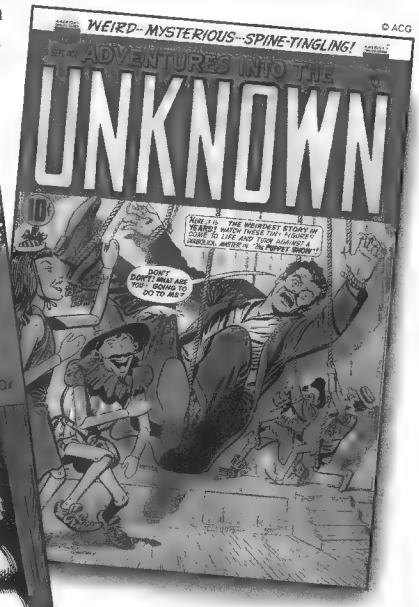
By Pat S. Calhoun

A doll carved in the image of a dead magician that comes to life for a murderous mission, a thief and killer who perfects a formula that shrinks him to eight-inch size, and puppets who gain the power of independent movement to wreak vengeance upon their vicious master: these are some of the tiny terrors to be found in the world of pre-Code fantasy comics. Few things are spookier than the idea of the little familiar things in our lives changing into insidious instruments intent on our doom. The concept of a toy that turns into a demon which menaces its young owner is a creepy one, and it's fully exploited in our first example of horror in miniature.

"The Doll" is the cover and lead feature of *Forbidden Worlds* #16 (April 1953). The opening sequence has an admirable amount of atmosphere and suspense as two boys explore a haunted house and one of them finds a doll that he takes home and gives to his kid sister. When the doll wakes to sentience and mobility its first act is to attack the family dog with a knitting needle. This clamor awakens the little girl, who calls for her parents, and the doll runs off to pursue its real purpose—the revival of the dead and buried black magician who created it. Soon the doll is chanting strange spells in the graveyard, and the corpse of Eben Crutch rises up—hungry for revenge. Although the tale's resolution utilizes the standard ACG "counter-spell," where mumbo-jumbo destroys the monster, the buildup is superbly horrifying, and the artwork is excellently expressive.

Along with a couple of stock weirdies this ish contains another memorable yarn, "Lure of the Snake Goddess," illustrated by one of ACG's best artists, George Carl Wilhelms. This is a nine-page extravaganza about an American archeologist and his daughter combing the jungles of India for a sacred statue of Mahrana the snake goddess. They find the statue in a temple and take it with them, against the pleas of the native guide, and soon the professor is found crushed to death as if by the coils of a giant snake. The daughter gives the statue to an American museum, but the snake goddess kills the curator and takes back her image. In typical ACG fashion the daughter's police detective boy-friend helps his fiancee against the serpent woman, and the conclusion is contrived, but it's fun, and Wilhelms' art has a graceful glowing beauty.

Magazine Enterprises' *Manhunt* was a crime title, but like many genres in the early 1950s—when fantasy reigned supreme—they would often use a horror cover to lure that large audience. *Manhunt* #14 (1953) mixes a woman in peril, a tiny terror, and a hypo cover into a potent image for a story where Kirk of Scotland Yard fights "The Little Man Who Wasn't There." The little man has concocted a formula—



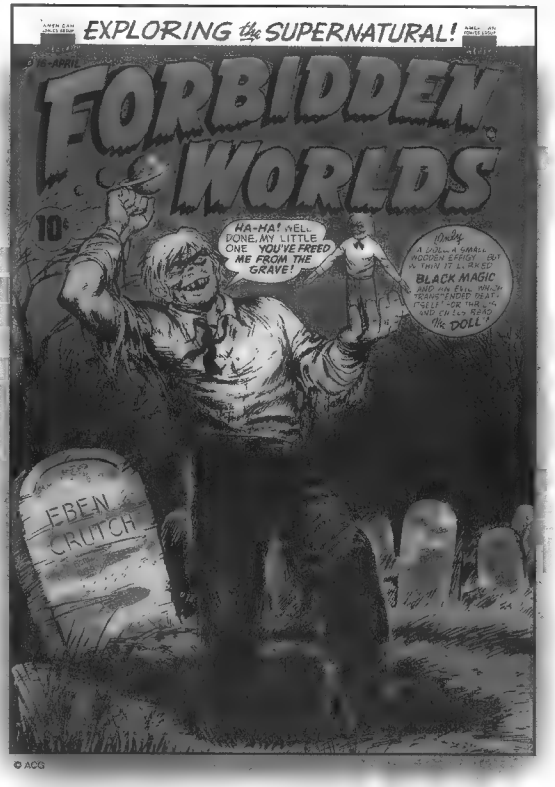
The infamous and highly collectible "bondage/hypo" cover on the last issue of Manhunt (#14, 1953), was designed to both attract and shock comic book readers.

Ogden Whitney's cover on Adv. Into The Unknown #59 (Sep/Oct 1954) gave no clue that the issue contained the last Truevision story, ACG's pseudo-3D process.

based on the techniques of the South American headhunting tribes who shrink the heads of their victims—to reduce an adult human to less than a foot high. This small size enables him to sneak around and indulge in a crime and murder spree, till Inspector Kirk catches up with him.

Also included are two other crime-fighter strips, both of which—like Kirk—had been around since the first issue: Undercover Girl—a svelte secret agent drawn by Ogden Whitney, and the Red Fox—a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman whose stories offered elegant nature art by the talented L. B. Cole. And "The Duke," a nondescript do-gooder, makes an appearance, rendered by Graham Ingels—the man known to EC fans as "Ghastly."

Our third tiny terror issue is another entry from the American Comics Group, from a title that was *Forbidden Worlds*' "big sister," *Adventures Into The Unknown*. These long-running supernatural titles are two of the great success stories of four-color fantasy. *Adventures Into The Unknown* #59 (September/October 1954) features an effective Ogden Whitney cover illustrating "The Puppet Show." The story inside is drawn by Harry Lazarus in a lurid style with a sure narrative grasp. This story is also the last use of ACG's "Truevision" process, a pseudo-3D effect composed of exaggerated perspectives, objects that protrude past panel borders, and—most distinctively—coloring the page background outside of the panels black. It's the usual story of an assistant who helps the puppets' creator run the show until an opportunity arises to kill the creator and set himself up as the star. But the murderer finds that the puppets can think and act on their own, and that they are determined to subject this usurper to a grim justice.



Eben Crutch rises from his grave in Forbidden Worlds #16 (April 1953), after the doll he made in his image performs the magic spell to revive his corpse. Forbidden Worlds was one of the two ACG fantasy titles whose runs stretched from the pre-Code era through the Silver Age.

1954 was ACG's most gruesome year; either editor Richard Hughes was using up violent inventory before the impending Comics Code went into effect, or he was running heavier horror to compete with the more outre publishers for the blood-hungry buyers.

The other highlight of the issue is "The Power of Hex," drawn by an artist who had a bunch of fine stories in the latter pre-Code ACGs, Kenneth Landau. The story centers on a white-trash witch-doctor who practices his hillbilly hoodoos when there's "a green moon over the black swamp." On one such night a gang of four crooks who've just robbed a bank shows up; he knows that the other thieves are plotting to kill him and keep his share of the loot, and he asks for magical help. The hexer tells him his death is inevitable but that he can buy revenge upon his three killers. He buys and leaves and gets shot, and the rest of the yarn details how the hexed doublecrossers get their due. Landau's art is a marvel of intricate line work with webs of crosshatching adding mood and depth to the backgrounds.

The theme of tiny terrors is but one of many that made the pre-Code fantasy comics such a rich vein of literary entertainment, the apex of the short story experience in four-color form.

COMING NEXT MONTH IN CBM

choke... cough... sputter... it's the
Strange Lives of
Jimmy Olsen & Lois Lane!

plus: A CBM special...
The Art of Kurt Schaffenberger!

Calling All Girls!

One of the truly classic pieces of Americana in all of comic history... and quite possibly the most undervalued book in the hobby!

By Michelle Nolan

Some of you fellows might not know it, but the Golden Age of comics was also a gilded time for four-color feminine fun.

In fact, in some respects mainstream comics were more liberated with regard to the interests of girls in the 1940s than at any time since.

And if you guys will hang on and continue reading, I think you'll find this column of "girl talk" worth your while, too.

If nothing else, you'll learn that your mothers and grandmothers (and if you're an old-timer, your sisters) were offered occasionally inspiring and worthwhile reading a generation before the beginnings of women's liberation.

Not many collectors today realize what an unorthodox gamble Parents Magazine took with the publication of *Calling All Girls* #1 (September 1941).

The newsstand comic book as we know it was only seven years old in 1941. And in that fateful year, at the end of which the United States was plunged into World War II, nearly all comics were devoted either to fantastic heroics (super or otherwise) or to newspaper reprints, most of which also stressed adventure themes.

It's difficult to believe today that of the 839 newsstand comic books with 1941 dates, fewer than 50 did not involve the themes of adventure. And the vast majority of those adventures were directed primarily at boys, although one suspects more than a few femmes picked up comics as well.

In fact, in 1941 only three regularly published titles featured funny animals—12 issues of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, the first three issues of *Looney Tunes* and the first issue of *Animal Comics*, all from Dell. The only other humor titles (other than a few Dell one-shots in the embryonic *Four-Color* series) were five issues of *Comics On Parade* (featuring newspaper reprints) from United Features Syndicate and issues #3 and 4 of *Mutt & Jeff* (also newspaper reprints) from National Comics.

Then there were the first couple of issues of *Classic Comics* along with the beginnings of the real-life genre, all of which stressed adventure themes as well—*True Comics, Real Heroes, Real Life Comics, Sport Comics, Trail Blazers, Pioneer Picture Stories* and *World Famous Heroes*.

There was, however, a unique comic book title created in 1941—*Calling All Girls*!

Calling All Girls was the first comic book designed specifically for female readers. As such, it belongs in any collector's Hall of Fame for first issues. (I know how much I prize my copy of the first issue!)

And it cost me all of $5 about 20 years ago, according to the price on the bag! I think *CAG* #1 is one of the truly classic pieces of Americana in all of comic history—and quite possibly the most undervalued book in the hobby. The 1997 *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* lists it at $10 in GD—in other words, it's worth less in real dollars today than when I found my copy two decades ago!

Calling All Girls #1 is also quite scarce. In fact, the first issue is not pictured in the *Gerber Photo-Journal*, which assigns it a scarcity rating of 6 (50 to 200 copies exist). I would certainly have to agree with that evaluation. Obviously, this has not been a high-demand comic book, yet it's definitely worth a look.

(By the way, I'm always flabbergasted by the collectors who approach me at conventions and urge me not to write about certain comics until they find them. They seem to feel that whenever I write about a comic book, demand and value suddenly goes up. Well, for whatever it's worth, I still need a lot of the books I write about, and I still write about them. I guess that means I'll never get another discount on the remaining issues I need of *Calling All Girls*, but such is the price, pun fully intended, of writing for *CBM*!)

Calling All Girls was so successful that it took only three years (by 1944) for the title to surpass half a million in circulation per issue

COMICS AND STORIES FOR GIRLS
DECEMBER No.35 15¢
POLLY PIGTAILS
Calling All GIRLS
A BRAND NEW MAGAZINE FOR GIRLS AND SUB-DEBS WITH 32 PAGES OF GIRL COMICS..AND STORIES AND OTHER FEATURES.. 64 PAGES, ALL IN FULL COLOR.
10¢
STORIES
COMICS
FEATURES

(such was the boast on the cover, and it's easy to believe).

Calling All Girls needed only four issues to become primarily a monthly early in 1942, and it ran 44 issues through 1945. Do you realize how few comic books were issued monthly in 1942? Thanks to Southern California indexer Dan Stevenson, I can tell you the exact number of comic books with 10 to 12 issues in 1942—there were only 35 such titles.

And *Calling All Girls* was one of them. Girls flocked to read it, since there had been nothing like it, as indicated by the letter from the publishers on the inside front cover.

a BIG 52 PAGE magazine
Miss America
PATSY WALKER FINDS LOVE in AMERICA'S BEST-LOVED COMIC STRIP STORIES
OCT 10¢
Plus
CHANGE of HEART
and other Romantic tales and features

Young models posed for the covers of many romance comics before the Code. Miss America V7 #27 (Oct 1949) is no exception.

For you trivia buffs, the cover girl was 13-year-old actress Gloria Jean (born Gloria Jean Schoonover, but went by Gloria Jean in the movies). Some film references list her as born in 1928, others in 1926. She was, according to David Quinlan's *Illustrated Directory of Film Stars*, "...a kind of teenybopper's Diana Lynn. Kept at Universal as a minor-league rival to Deanna Durbin, Gloria was pretty as paint and as cute as a button. Her youthful face enlivened many a penny-pinching swing session, and she deserved better than her relatively brief career." Another film reference says she eventually became a receptionist for a cosmetics company.

The 64-page first issue of *CAG* contained four comic stories—an 8-pager on Queen Elizabeth (the mother of the current Queen); a 9-pager on author Osa Johnson, "the famed jungle adventuress," as the story so quaintly dubbed her; a fictional 7-pager on Judy Wing, Air Hostess No. 1 (aviation themes were huge in the early years of comics, just as they were in all of popular culture); and a fictional 8-pager on the teenage adventures of the Yorktown Younger Set, which "lives in a town like yours." (Naturally!)

The other half of the first issue contained an astonishing amount of text stories for the reader's dime. There was a 4-page story devoted to Connie Martin, a Nancy Drew knockoff; a 4-pager devoted to circus girls; a 3-pager on Gloria Jean herself; a 3-pager by publisher George Hecht on "13 ways girls can help in the national defense;" a 2-pager on manners; a 3-pager by best-selling boys' story author John R. Tunis on women in sports; a 2-pager on grooming; a 4-pager on a fictional female boater; a 2-pager on films; a 2-pager on fashion, with delightful drawings; a page on fashion accessories; and a 2-pager on cooking, by the famed food writer Cecily Brownstone.

This issue gave girls an awful lot of reading, some of it inspirational and showing they could be more than "just a girl," as the boys in Tubby's clubhouse used to say a decade later.

The most intriguing aspect of *Calling All Girls* is that it treated girls not as boy-crazy or male-dependent, but as interesting individuals in their own right. The ensuing issues of *Calling All Girls* expanded on this theme. This was definitely a mini "feminist manifesto" for teens... and way before America went to war with the help of Rosie The Riveter!

However, with the December 1945 issue (#44), *Calling All Girls* eliminated the comic strips. Its two 1945 strips, Judy Wing and The Victory Club, became text stories, with an explanation from the editor involving the different types of paper needed to print comics.

However, I suspect the real reason was two-fold. First, *Calling All Girls* had become so popular that there were dozens of advertisements for girls (there were none in the first issue). Second, Parents Magazine was about to embark on publishing its second magazine for girls—*Polly Pigtails*!

Polly Pigtails was targeted for grammar-school girls—the younger sisters of the older teens that *Calling All Girls* had become designed for—and debuted with #1 in January of 1946. I guess Parents Magazine by this time felt the comic strips were not of interest to older girls, for they confined them to *Polly Pigtails*, which was advertised as "of interest to girls 7-12."

By the time Miss America V7 #33 (Apr 1950, right) hit the stands, the title had evolved into a combination romance/teen humor book.

Polly Pigtails also quickly became a monthly, with the third issue, and remained so through the first half of 1949, the year Parents Magazine stopped publishing comic books.

In 1950, *Calling All Girls* changed its name to *Senior Prom* with #90 and at the same time *Polly Pigtails* became Girls' Fun and Fashion Magazine with #44, reflecting the increasing sophistication of the post-war era. I have no idea how long *Senior Prom* was published—I've tried for years in vain to find an issue of it—but *Girls' Fun and Fashion Magazine* lasted only four issues, although it continued to publish the same comic strips that ran in *Polly Pigtails*.

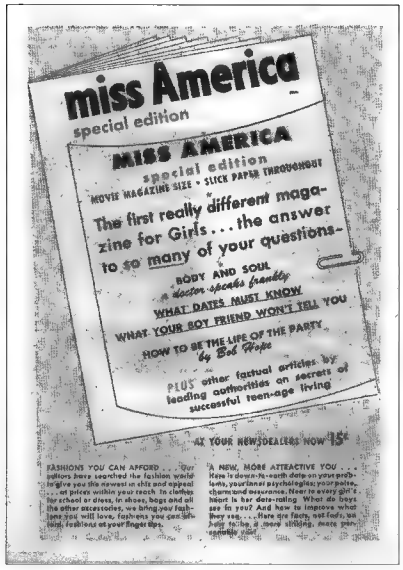
Parents Magazine's two monthly publications for girls became so popular that the company tried a third title, *Sweet Sixteen*, which ran 13 issues from #1 (August/September 1946) through #13 (January 1948), with a mixture of fictional and factual comic strips designed for teen girls. The last nine issues of *Sweet Sixteen* ran monthly, meaning that in 1947 Parents Magazine was publishing three monthly titles for girls!

That leads us to a fourth monthly title for girls in the post-war period—Timely's *Miss America*, edited during part of its run by the debonair Stan Lee!

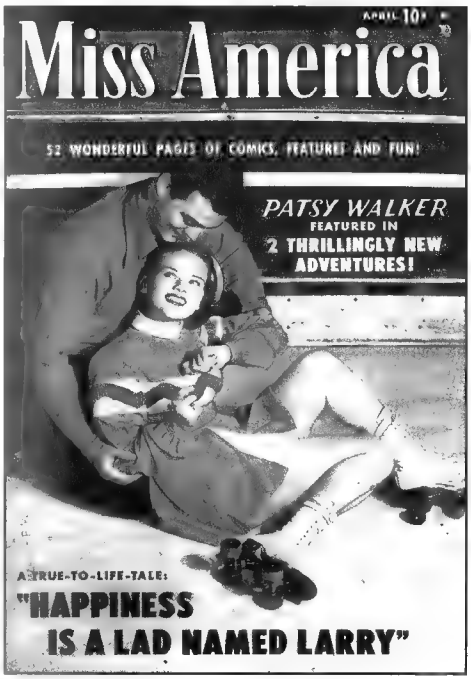
Miss America had its origins in a beautiful one-shot 1944 super heroine title featuring the character that first appeared in *Marvel Mystery Comics* #49 (November 1943). Miss America also appeared in *Miss America* #2-6 before the title was given over entirely to a few teen humor characters, led by the ubiquitous Patsy Walker, along with a huge number of text features and advertisements.

During the 1945-47 period, the *Miss America* title was pretty much a direct knockoff of *Calling All Girls*, a great example of Timely publisher Martin Goodman's uncanny ability to milk a trend (literally) for all it was worth.

For example, the issue of *Miss America* dated October 1945 (Volume 3, #1) was 76 pages long for a dime! It contained no less than 28 major display advertisements, showing just how strong the market for female readers was! There were only 13 pages of comic strips—a 7-page Patsy Walker strip and a 6-page Betty Blair story. The rest of the issue was made up of text features on film, health, records, hair, fashion, pets and recipes. There was also a marvelous text feature urging tolerance for diversity entitled "Are You a Hater?" by famed singer Kate Smith


miss America
special edition
MISS AMERICA
special edition
MOVIE MAGAZINE SIZE • SLICK PAPER THROUGHOUT
The first really different maga-zine for Girls . . . the answer to so many of your questions-
BODY AND SOUL
a doctor speaks frankly
WHAT DATES MUST KNOW
WHAT YOUR BOY FRIEND WON'T TELL YOU
HOW TO BE THE LIFE OF THE PARTY
by Bob Hope
PLUS other factual articles by leading authorities on secrets of successful teen-age living
AT YOUR NEWSDEALERS NOW 15¢

Interior ad for the scarce & collectible "slick, magazine-size" Miss America Special Edition. which hit the stands in late 1949.



FIGURING OUT THAT WACKY NUMBERING...

Miss America had one of those numbering systems that plagued comic collectors for years (until we finally figured it out). After the one-shot *Miss America* super heroine title, the first 30 issues were published in five volumes of six issues each, so that #30 was Vol. 5, #6 (April 1947). For some reason, there were only three issues in Volume 6 (May, June and July). Then, with Volume 7 #1 (August 1947), *Miss America* was listed as Volume 7 all the way through Volume 7 #52 (May 1953). Then the title continued as #53 (June 1953) until finally expiring with #93 (November 1958). No explanation has ever been issued for this bizarre numbering system, and no other Timely/Marvel/Atlas title had a similar system. All told, *Miss America* ran 126 issues in its various incarnations and styles.

(or more likely, ghost written for her).

By the middle of 1947, thanks to its healthy advertising base, *Miss America* was still a full 68 pages—which had been the standard size for comic books in the first decade of their existence but was largely abandoned by the end of 1943. But in the second half of that year, *Miss America* dwindled to the standard 52-page size. And as time went by, there were fewer and fewer text features and more and more comics, until *Miss America* had become pretty much a standard teenage comic, similar to Timely's *Junior Miss* and other anthology titles.

The last monthly issue of *Miss America* was Volume #7 #33, April 1950 (more on this odd numbering system in a moment). This appeared just before the first Timely/Marvel implosion, which resulted in most of its titles being dropped or cut back to quarterly status. Timely/Marvel published 271 comic books dated 1949… 42 issues more than No. 2 publisher DC and 49 more than No. 3 publisher Dell. Amazingly, Timely/Marvel printed only 187 in 1950.

It's interesting to note that by the April, 1950 issue, *Miss America* contained only nine advertisements (typical for the period) in a 52-page issue, along with two 7-page Patsy Walker stories, two 6-page serious romance stories and a 5-page romance text story entitled "Roadside Romance." The romance story plugged on the cover was entitled "Happiness is a Lad Named Larry" —which just happened to be the name of editor Stan Lee's brother, Larry Lieber!

PAGE 11:
Not pictured in the Gerber Photo-Journal, Calling All Girls #1 (Sep 1941) is the first comic ever designed just for girls!

Polly Pigtails advertised that it was "designed for girls 7-12." Shown here is issue #35 (Dec 1948) with its historic collage of previous covers.

The color cover of Sweet Sixteen #5 (May 1947) featured a line-drawn Gregory Peck and a black and white inset of budding actress Ann Francis (who was actually 16 years old in the photo). A decade later, she went on to star in the classic sci fi film of 1956 Forbidden Planet.

Gone was any sort of inspiration for girls to become much more than love objects. There were a few text features, but the feel of the comic was definitely different. This, of course, was due in part to the success of teen humor comics along with the new romance comic genre, which became a newsstand flood in 1949 and 1950 (after the first tentative flings in 1947 and 1948).

It was also due, I think, to the fact that beginning in the late 1940s, women were increasingly urged to follow domestic lives and typically female pursuits and to let the men resume the education and the power careers that had been interrupted by WWII. Women were needed to do so-called men's jobs on the homefront during much of the 1940s, but that time had passed—at least in the minds of many people.

That's one big reason there were no comics like *Calling All Girls* or the original *Miss America* in the 1950s. A typical 1943 issue of *Calling All Girls* would have seemed out of place, indeed, on the 1950's comic book scene.

For example, Atlas (as Timely/Marvel became known in the 1951-57 period) tried publishing a comic "edited by Patsy Walker" entitled *Girls' Life* in 1954, but it did not succeed.

The *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* lists six issues (January 1954-November 1954). I have the first three, but I've never seen or heard of anyone having #4, 5 and 6. Does anyone have these?

Other than the teen humor, movie and romance titles, there was one other genuine attempt at a comic for girls—six issues of *Keen Teens* from Magazine Enterprises in 1945-47. (*Young Life* #1-3 and its successor *Teen Life* #4-5, were published by New Age Publishers, but these were general-interest teen titles).

Keen Teens featured articles like "Are You on the Boys' Hate Parade?" (#4, April/May 1947). Issues #2-5 featured male heart-throb singers on the covers. The last issue, #6, dated August/September 1947 (which is not pictured in the *Gerber Photo-Journal*) featured actress-ballerina Bambi Linn. These comics are amusing period pieces, but they contain nothing of real inspiration to girls the way *Calling All Girls* and the early issues of *Miss America* did.

Gardner Fox, the famed National Comics superhero writer, also wrote for Magazine Enterprises and contributed several interesting text stories for *Keen Teens*. This doubtless developed through his connection with ME publisher Vincent Sullivan, who worked for National until going on to found ME about the time the war ended.

Of course, many comics were marketed primarily for girls in the 1950s—the fashion-oriented *Katie Keen*, the multitude of teen humor titles led by the Archie Series, and the many, many romance titles. But, as interesting as these are, they're just not the same as the likes of *Calling All Girls* and *Miss America*. Those kind of comics have never reappeared!

For those interested in the topic, Trina Robbins, the comic book artist and historian, is completing a seminal book about comics for girls and women. If you enjoyed her recent book on "The Great Women Super Heroes," you'll probably enjoy this next project by Trina.

Until then, just remember that a few comics once were "calling all girls," too!

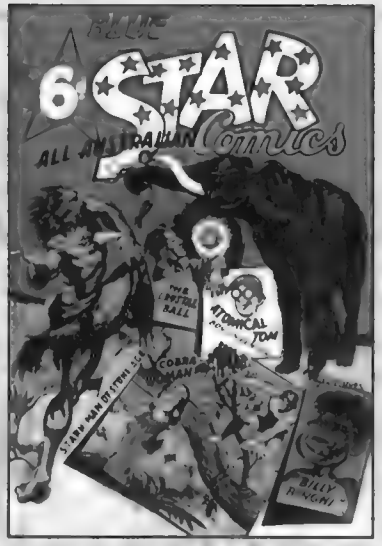
Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

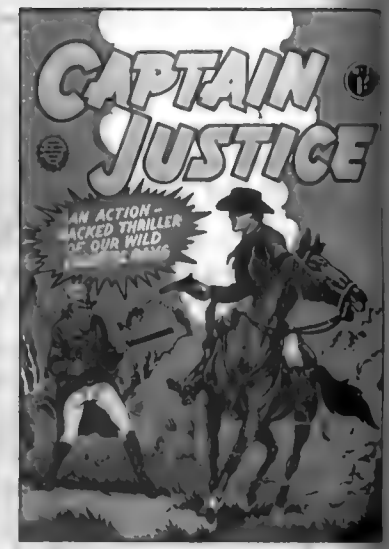
Dear Carl,

We hope your 97th Birthday Is...

just ducky!

...From all your friends at Gemstone & CBM!





The logo of the Australian classic, Blue Star All Australian Comics, bears a striking resemblance to All American's All-Star Comics. The artist and author Monty Wedd used his research of Australian colonial history in Captain Justice (issue #3 shown here). The themes presented in the title show an amazing parallel between America's wild west and Australia's early pioneer days.

By law, the American comic book must have an indicia (publishing details) that usually appears on the inside front cover, page one, or elsewhere in the magazine. This has assisted both collectors and catalogue producers immensely. However, no such law applied in Australia – anything goes—and did!

Added to this, so many of the smaller Australian publishers had what could only be described as a warped idea of accurate numbering. For instance, so many were unnumbered at the beginning. We can only assume that the first few issues were trials as to whether the publisher had a winner on their hands. So suddenly #3 would be numbered as such with the first two with no number.

This, at least, is both understandable and easy to deal with. Which issue is #1 and which is #2 is another matter. What becomes annoying is when a series will begin at #9 with no #1–#8—nothing!

Australia had some comic book series where there are missing numbers—they were never printed. Some series had two different comics with the same numbers. Some series had annuals that sometimes incorporated a number in the series and in another year, the annual was separate and had no effect on the numbering.

Then there was the habit of some publications to number in volumes and numbers. The trouble being, how many comics to the volume? The final problem that faces many collectors worldwide: When did the series end?

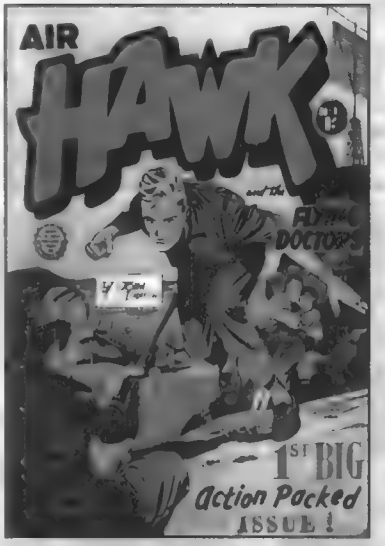
Little wonder that it has been all this time for someone to attempt to put such a guide together but the question remains: why stop at 1966?

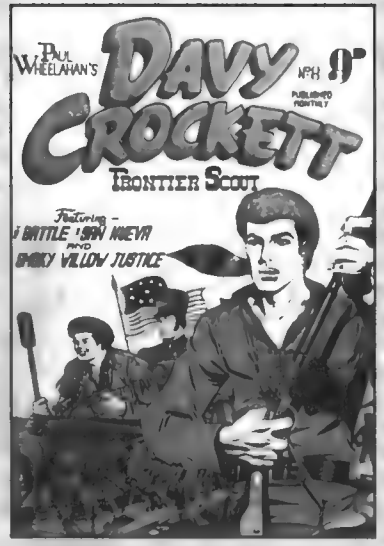
Again, it comes down to the haphazard way Aussie comics were produced. If the numbering was a disaster, the dating of comics was even more so. Very few comics were dated by the year and a very small minority printed the month of the publication. Dating Aussie comics has been vague and even with the current catalogue research, many titles can only be dated by the decade: 1940s for instance.

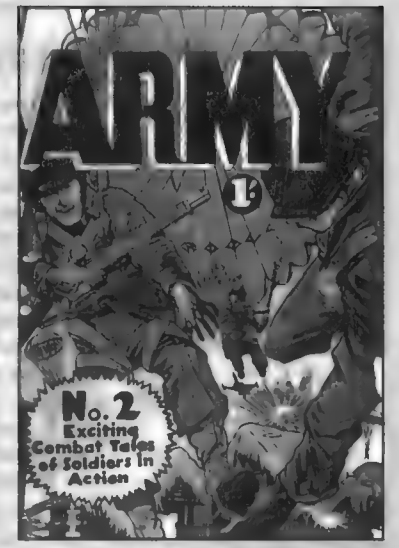
A careful reading of the introduction to *Australian Comics 1924-1996: An Index and Price Guide* indicates that it wasn't just the currency change that gave a clear cut off date. By 1966 there was a worldwide slump in comics and in Australia, some special circumstances.

Like America, Australia adapted quickly to the introduction of comic books in the late 1930s. Popular titles such as *Superman* were imported and eagerly read but in 1940 Australia placed a ban on imported US comics. The dark days of World War II caused concern for the valued American dollar leaving the country. It didn't stop the British imports of comics coming in but these were mainly for a younger generation of children. They were a different product: larger pages, written stories, the same printed stock as the inside pages and half the price. Threepence (two and a half cents)

Comics Dow







as against the accepted sixpence (five cents).

Even in England at the time, they were referred to as comic papers, not comic books. Much is still made of Australia's close links to Britain. The current push towards a republic is far from a united one. But it was obvious, from a comic book standpoint, that the initial US imports were the most popular concepts, as against the English imports. Readers wanted that concept to continue. Thus began the Australian comic book boom.

It is important to note here that there were, and are, different types of Australian comic books. The vast majority were reprints of British and American originals. With less pages that the US counterparts, more issues were possible and some covers showed the 'Australianization' of world favourites. Captain Marvel flying under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. No opera house—it hadn't been built then. Batman and Superman playing cricket—all worthy of a future article on its own.

Another category of Aussie comic books was the large number of overseas and local comic strips converted into unique comic books. It would seem that some newspapers that printed an American comic strip were allowed to later reproduce that strip in comic book form.

Overstreet, in their *Comic Book Price Guide*, has for years mentioned this source of collecting comic strips. Found in their "Foreign Comic Books" section, they have obviously had the Aussie reprint comics in mind. While this is also worthy of another article, allow me one example.

Every Frank Frazetta fan was overjoyed when a book of his 'Johnny Comet' strips was printed in 1991. Prior to this book, a collector would have had to be content with newspaper clippings or photocopies. But in Australia, the 'Johnny Comet' strips appeared in their own comic and with others in the early 1950s.

Daily strips were never designed for colour to be added and, again, the Aussie product was ideal as very few comics were ever printed in colour except for the covers. Frazetta's strip was by no means alone. There were many other examples.

The third category was the Australian drawn comic book. Where there was a mix of overseas and locally drawn material, the Morrisons have defined an Aussie comic book as one where the main character, the first story, is Australian drawn.

Buyers of this book need to note that only the locally drawn comic book is listed in this catalogue. Enough local collectors are seeking the local product because of its uniqueness. Historians and cultural researchers have also wanted such a book. The acceptance of comic books within the US library

Air Hawk #1 (one of Australia's most popular strips), is the first of three issues and is considered highly collectible. Davy Crockett (#8 above) is written and drawn by Paul Wheelahan, famous for his 1950 series The Panther. Issues of Army (#2 above) featuring creator Moira Bertrum are historically important because she was one of the few women to do war comics in the mid 1950s, a long time before women's liberation.

wn Under

BY JOHN CLEMENTS

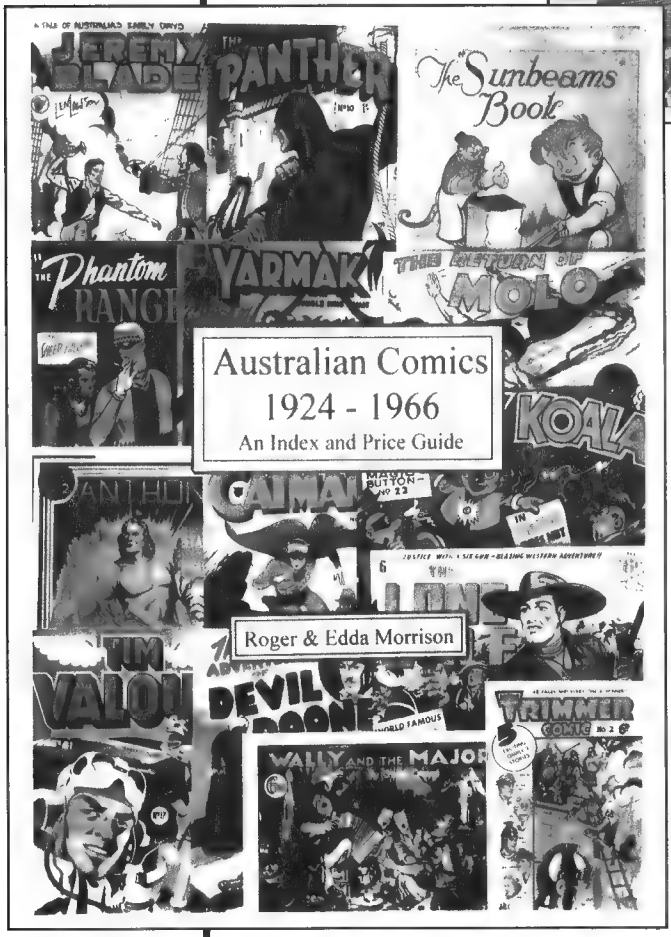
The Book...

With the publication of Australian Comics 1924-1966: An Index and Price Guide the Aussie comic collectors now have their own price guide but the differences between it and the US guides are many.

The most obvious is that this first attempt does not claim to be the 1997 guide (the date of its publication) and it may stand for quite a few years ahead. The American product had needed more updates than just an annual as this publication has indicated.

Secondly, the starting point of 1924 is understandable as this was the year that the first Australian comic appeared but why stop at 1966? This was the year that Australia changed its currency from the British inheritance of pounds, shillings and pence to dollars and cents. It became law that products, including local comics, had to show both currency prices leading up to the changeover date and then the new currency from that date onwards.

The authors of the first Australian comic book price guide and their well-received book.



The Team Behind the Book

There will be many a reader that will recognise Roger Morrison. For many years he has been to the major American comic book conventions with the purpose of buying American stock. Many a well-known dealer has had contact with Roger and for many, he represents Australia.

His shop in Sydney was a main focus for collectors and for years, the second hand book scene would refer people to him for valuations. Both a blessing and a curse. Roger remarks:

"There are many reasons why we put this book together. I needed the information as a keen collector of Australian comics and no one else was providing the information...."

This is somewhat of an understatement as Roger would have the largest and most comprehensive collection in this narrow definition. For 17 years he has bought and sold comics so his understanding of the true valuation can hardly be questioned. One has to only observe the many other sellers that come to him in the local conventions to gain information. It would be safe to say that he is the only person who could have attempted such a task.

There is another reason that is less idyllic. For years, Roger's knowledge has always *(Continued on page 55)*

scene has been a difficult one and is still very slow. In Australia, it has barely started. A recent two year tour of Australian comic books from Melbourne's Monash University has been a big step towards a greater acceptance. It drew record crowds.

Still, the US influence is very strong even here. Initially, with the sudden ban on overseas imports, some publishers pretended that their product was still American. The word 'Yank' appears in the titles to many comic books that were anything but. For instance, the series 'Super Yank Comics' is listed in this index. The second story was 'The Phantom' comic strip reprints while the lead comic was 'The Catman.' Sound familiar?

It was written and drawn under license from America and was the lead story. Current AC comic collectors will note that in their 'The original Cat-man and Kitten retro comics' #3 issues (1997) features one of John Dixon's earlier efforts. John will be better known for his worldwide 'Air Hawk and the flying doctors' successful comic strips.

Other US originals were also written and drawn under license. As another example 'Sgt. Pat' and 'Brenda Starr' had many issues drawn by Yaroslav (signed 'Larry') Horak. One can see his style developing in these series that were to become famous when he later went to England and worked on the James Bond strip. Again, another story.

Within Australia the patriotic collector remembers the comic books that didn't pretend to be anything but a local product. Keith Chatto's 'Skippy,' Eric Jolliffe's 'Trent of the Territory' and Monty Wedd's 'Captain Justice' come quickly to mind.

Despite paper shortages in the war years, Australian produced comic books was a boom industry. Peter Coleman in his book: *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition*, claimed that "By 1954 there were over 60 million comic books produced each year… " in Australia. A staggering number when you consider that the population number at the time was well under nine million people.

Part of the answer here was the huge export efforts. England read the Australian reprints of all DC titles. It could have been the same currency (sixpenny to eightpenny to ninepenny to one shilling (ten cents) and for some giant comics: two shillings). There would have been no reprinting of covers or messy price stickers. There are many theories.

A quick glance at the popular book, *Nostalgia About Comics*, that explored the British scene, showed a huge number of Australian produced comic books both US reprints and Aussie drawn. Compiled by P. Clarke and M. Higgs in 1991, this excellent book reinforces the export belief.

New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and South Africa were other areas of Aussie comic book export. Exports to the US were never official but well-known American comic book historian George Hagenauer did remark on the very large number of Australian *Phantom* reprints that flooded the Chicago comic convention just prior to the film release of *The Phantom* in 1996.

The Aussie industry didn't die suddenly. Roger and Edda Morrison's introduction to their book lists the causes. In the 1950s, the censorship problem was felt worldwide. Wertham's efforts extended beyond America but anything so popular that affects children will always have a strong critical focus.

Secondly, the introduction of television in Australia was in 1956 and this was many years after America. As production of television programmes was well advanced in quality by then, the impact was stronger and immediate.

The final death knell was the lifting of the ban on imports of the US comics in 1959. The full coloured imports were immediately better received than the local black and white efforts. American reprints ceased almost immediately. Increased paper and production costs caused the local product to become a rare novelty by 1966.

Since 1966 there has always been a small local comic book industry. Efforts by such people as Gerald Carr are to be admired as a lone voice in the barren years. Recent years have seen a resurgence in local comic book publishing but not to the same extent as those golden years. The same could be said worldwide. Cheaper printing that makes shorter runs viable and the opportunity to display one's goods in the wide circulation catalogues such as *Previews*, give a comic book, a better chance on the world stage.

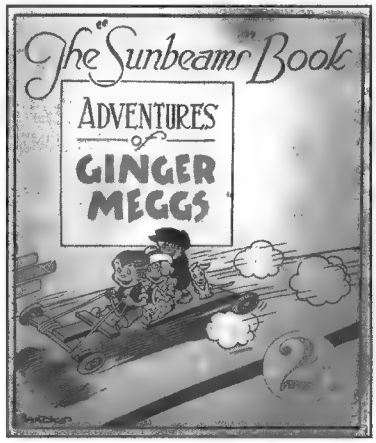
Roger and Edda's book: *Australian Comics 1924-1966: An Index and Price Guide* is an attractive book. A soft covered square bound book that measures 18 ½ CM (7¼") x 26 CM (10¼"). A convenient size to carry around markets and conventions. With a full coloured cover, it also contains four full coloured pages inside that reproduce 16 popular comic covers. Its 118 pages contain more than 175 individual titles that detail the publisher, the original price and details on the number of issues and where the original prices change. Unlike the US prices guides, there is only one current price for 'good' copy.

As collectors, we are all aware of a comic book's condition as related to its financial value. With some rare US comics, the difference can be hundreds to thousands of dollars. Little wonder that so much space in this publication is given over to grading.

Not so in Australia, towards its own product. With the most valuable comic book listed at $500 and many rare items around the $100 mark, the condition is less critical. The one price listed is for 'good' condition and that would cover quite a range.

Also, because of a shorter production run, many titles are almost impossible to locate. Comic book collecting has a much smaller local base than in the US or Britain. If interest continues to grow, so will the prices.

Adventures of Ginger Meggs is the oldest comic book and the most valuable. Valued at $500, it is very difficult to find in good condition and is an annual of Sunday comic strips.



John Clements is a historian for Australia's Black and White Artists' Association and writes articles in this specialty for the Australian media. He is a keen collector of both Australian comics and original artwork.

MORT

BY SAM MARONIE

When asked who is the greatest comic book editor of all time, each fan will have is own nominee. Many will credit Stan Lee for elevating comics to an adult level. Others may choose Julius Schwartz for reinventing the superhero for a new era. There may also be strong cases made for greats like Will Eisner, William Gaines, Lev Gleason or Sheldon Mayer.

The name of Mort Weisinger will probably never even be mentioned. While his accomplishments as an editor are legendary, today Weisinger is, for many, the "forgotten man" in comic book fandom... and there has been amazingly little written about his editorial style, publishing successes, and his life in general.

Weisinger was a long-time DC editor from the 1940s through the 1960s. He edited some of the early Batman tales during the Golden Age, and along the way created second-banana characters like The Tarantula, Green Arrow and Aquaman.

But he made his mark as chief with the "Superman Family" books, leading DC's valuable property to new heights during the 1950s and 1960s. Mort's stable of titles was *Action Comics; Adventure Comics; Superman; Superboy; Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane; Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen;* and, towards the end of his career, *World's Finest Comics*.

During this era, the Superman books were a natural step in a comic book reader's growing process. First came the Disney or other "funny animal" books. And as the adolescent fan grew, the Superman titles came next. Eventually readers graduated to Schwartz science-fiction/superhero line—which at that time were the top-of-the-heap so to speak. It was only later that the "Marvel Age of Comics" would raise the bar to a new level of competition, reader identification, and popularity.

For this author, the lack of interest in (and sometimes even respect for) Weisinger and his many contributions is puzzling. Some of today's Silver Age collectors denigrate Mort's gimmicky stories and tongue-in-cheek plots as overly juvenile. But at their peak, his books were extremely popular and boasted large circulations.

And in the waning years of comics readership in the 1950s (when other titles and companies were dropping like flies), Weisinger actually added two titles (*Jimmy Olsen* and *Lois Lane*). During a rare interview in the 1970s, Mort claimed to have created these books under fierce opposition from the publishers—only to have them become enormous successes.

From Pulps to Comics

Comic book editing came naturally to Weisinger. An active SF fan in the late 1920s and '30s with Julius Schwartz, Mort eventually became a pulp magazine editor.

At Poplar Publications he worked alongside famous publisher Leo Marguiles. Weisinger and his mentor Marguiles co-created the adventure series Captain Future "on-the-spot" during an early science-fiction convention. Incidentally, the author of this pulp feature was (eventually) Superman scribe Edmond Hamilton.

Most fondly remembered among fans is Weisinger's "golden era"—the (roughly) five year period from 1959 through 1963. During this stretch he and his staff were at their creative zenith, devising many of the characters and concepts still used today. Practically everything they did during this time was a hit with readers and boosted DC circulation.

Weisinger's enduring contributions to the Superman Mythos during this half-decade are many and varied. Here's just a partial listing:

Lots of Red Kryptonite/Green Kryptonite stories.

These were a sure-fire cure for writer's block and reader boredom. For example, Red K (which causes strange transformations to residents of Krypton) turns Superman into a super Jekyll & Hyde. Or Green K (which is fatal to Kryptonians) permeates Jimmy Olsen's skin and the boy reporter is now poison to his best pal! Jeepers!

The Bottle City of Kandor

Kandor was a Kryptonian city shrunk by villain Brainiac and preserved in a bottle. Housed in Superman's Fortress of Solitude, Kandor was a clever gimmick that became a deus ex machina for resolving stubborn story plots. The Kandorians were always around to be temporarily enlarged to protect Superman's secret identity or bail him out of an inescapable jam.

The Phantom Zone

The "Zone" involved even more survivors of Krypton—criminals who were projected into a ghostly netherworld as punishment. The inevitable escapees allowed Superman to square off against a foe equally as super-powered. This theme was considered such a good plot element, that it was later used in one of the Superman films starring Christopher Reeve.

Supergirl

Superman's young and beautiful cousin served the dual purpose of protecting copyright and attracting female readers. Serving as Superman's "secret weapon," the teenage (you guessed it) survivor of Krypton operated incognito until her identity was eventually revealed to the world.

The Legion of Super Heroes

The Legion just may have been Mort's single most important contribution to the Superman Legend. Introduced in a one-shot tale in *Adventure* #247, the group of super-powered teens from the future returned periodically to pull

Superman (boy)'s bacon out of the fire. The team eventually gained a regular strip of their own in *Adventure* #300 (see *CBM* #57). The Legion is still published today, carrying one of the most rabid fan-followings in comics history.

Bizarro

Originally a tragic Frankenstein-like figure, this phenomenally popular character ended up with his own series in *Adventure Comics*. With the usual Weisinger overdoing, the Bizarro Superman evolved from a pathetic, misunderstood creature into a lame comedian. Bizarro versions of Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, et al. soon appeared, setting up housekeeping on their own square Bizarro world.

And this overview couldn't even begin to list the additional Superman kitsch spawned during Weisinger's five-year spree. There were boo-boo contests, super-robots, imaginary stories, and even a Legion of Super-Pets—just to name a few. Restraint was never one of Mort's virtues. It has been said that "Mort built his own universe… and then proceeded to overpopulate it!"

The Weisinger Bullpen

Weisinger built a talented stable of artists to give form to his vision. The delicate renderings of Curt Swan (usually inked by George Klein) graced most of the covers. The duo also contributed many stories to *Superman, Action Comics* and *Jimmy Olsen*.

Wayne Boring was concentrating on the *Superman* daily newspaper strip, yet still turned in an occasional story or two. John Sikela, George Papp and occasionally Swan handled the *Superboy* and *Adventure Comics* assignments. Veteran Al Plastino took an occasional *Action* or *Superman* job to give the overworked Swan a rest.

Kurt Schaffenberger shouldered the *Lois Lane* book almost single-handedly. John Forte's stiff figures lent a nightmare look to the weird Bizarro stories, and provided a linear 30th century for the Legion strip.

Jim Mooney's still-underrated craftsmanship helped carry the Supergirl assignment. Mooney and occasional work by Shelly Moldoff took up the Legion slack after Forte's death.

Weisinger's list of scribes reads like a Who's Who of the science-fiction world. Utilizing his many contacts as a SF editor, Mort called on authors like Edmond Hamilton, Otto Binder and William Woolfolk for material.

And, ironies of ironies, the Man of Steel's co-creator, Jerry Siegel, penned many stories—often the most memorable of the Superman Legend. "The Death of Superman," "Superman's Return to Krypton," and others sprung from Siegel's typewriter and became classics.

Going from one extreme to the other, Weisinger used not only these veteran wordsmiths, but practically robbed the cradle for new talent. Young teens Cary Bates and Jim Shooter—still wet behind the ears at the time—submitted cover ideas. Mort liked their work, and they eventually went on to full scripting.

Weisinger just wasn't producing comic books; he was creating a mythological pantheon (perhaps somewhat similar to the way today's X-title readers see this Marvel legend-in-the-making). You almost had to have a "program" to tell who was who, understand what was going on in Mort's cosmos, and to appreciate the many references and plot twists.

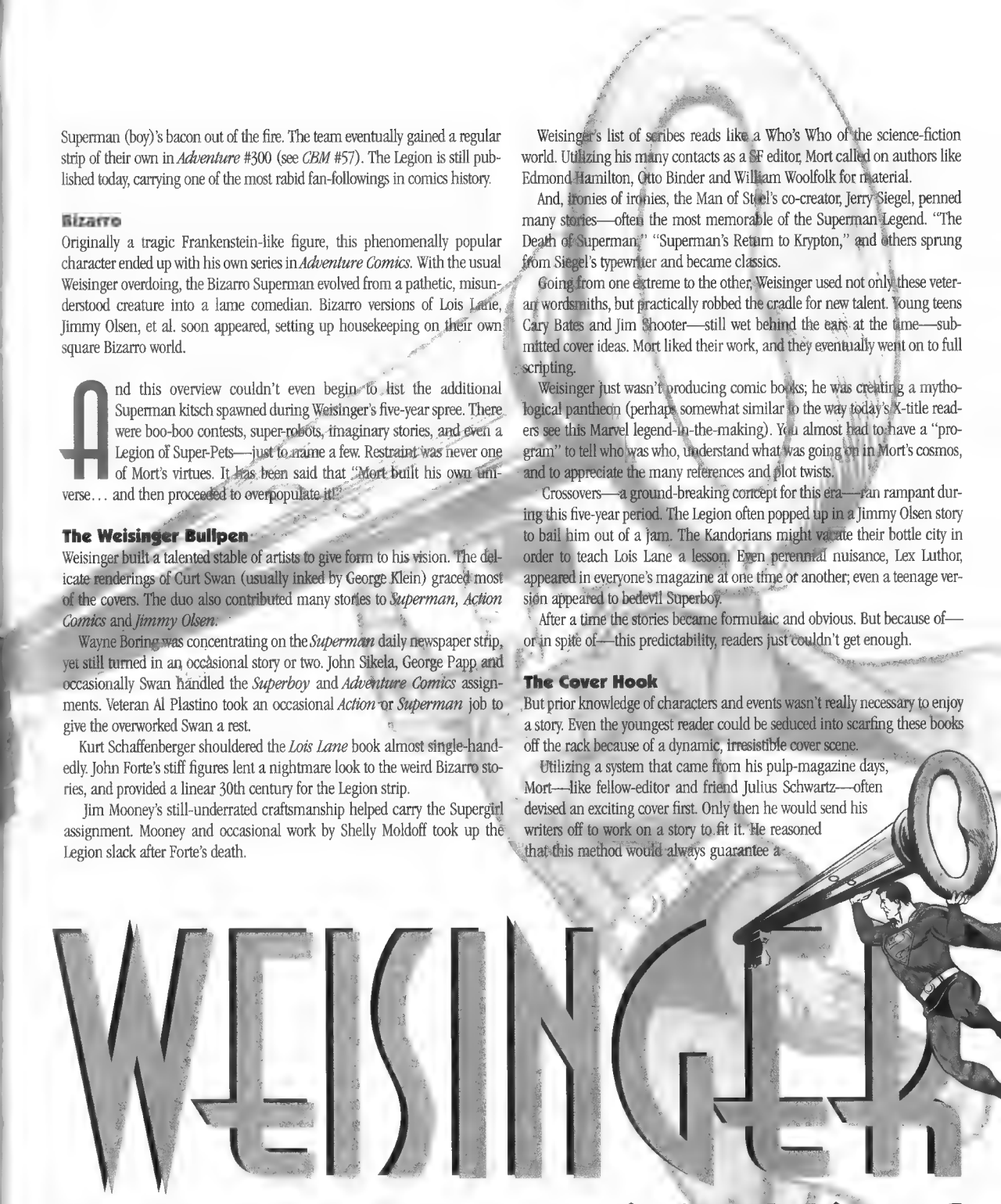
Crossovers—a ground-breaking concept for this era—ran rampant during this five-year period. The Legion often popped up in a Jimmy Olsen story to bail him out of a jam. The Kandorians might vacate their bottle city in order to teach Lois Lane a lesson. Even perennial nuisance, Lex Luthor, appeared in everyone's magazine at one time or another; even a teenage version appeared to bedevil Superboy.

After a time the stories became formulaic and obvious. But because of—or in spite of—this predictability, readers just couldn't get enough.

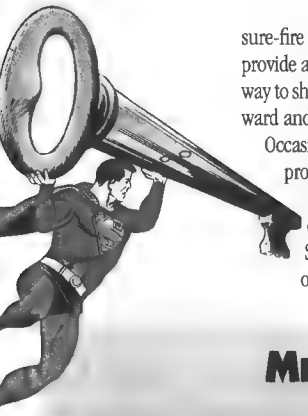
The Cover Hook

But prior knowledge of characters and events wasn't really necessary to enjoy a story. Even the youngest reader could be seduced into scarfing these books off the rack because of a dynamic, irresistible cover scene.

Utilizing a system that came from his pulp-magazine days, Mort—like fellow-editor and friend Julius Schwartz—often devised an exciting cover first. Only then he would send his writers off to work on a story to fit it. He reasoned that this method would always guarantee a



…The Forgotten Man of comic book history!



sure-fire hook for the newsstand browser. These 'gags' could provide a great springboard for the writers, although devising a way to shoehorn the cover scene into a tale was sometimes awkward and intrusive.

Occasionally the cover was a natural outgrowth from a provocative story. Yet it's amusing to leaf through a stack of Mort's books and try to play the "chicken or the egg" game with the covers. An early '60's *Action* shows Supergirl and her super-cat, Streaky engaged in a tug-of-war with Superman and his dog, Krypto. Yet when you look inside, this scene reflects only a minor story point.

An *Adventure* cover depicts the generic scene of Luthor projecting Superboy and Supergirl into the Phantom Zone. It could have fit one of a dozen different stories.

There were other great images: Superman using his x-ray vision to reveal Lois, Jimmy and Perry White to be robots; a western showdown with phantom-zone projectors instead of six-guns. And there's the all-time classic cover with the magical imp, Mr. Mxyzptlk transforming a submarine into a "banana boat."

Mort also had a thing about titles. After years of studying circulation figures he discovered a collection of buzzwords that were guaranteed to "goose up" sales. Use of the terms 'Origin,' 'Untold,' 'Secret' and 'Ghost' insured a jump in readership.

So we saw tons of things like "The Untold Story of Superboy's Spectacles," "The Ghost of Jor-El," "The Secret of Krypton's Scarlet Jungle," and others using these hot-button words.

Often the covers and concepts were taken directly from Mort's old SF pulps. The infamous Giant Turtle-Boy Olsen is a pointed example of this borrowing from the past. But why not? At that time there were no hard-core fans and collectors; readership was estimated to turn over every 5-6 years.

So Mort would occasionally dust off an old story, add a couple of twists to it (when he bothered), and present it to a new audience. Sometimes he would even take a reprint and have panels redrawn to make a hybrid old/new presentation.

Every Kid's Fantasy?

Mort's 'Superman Family' was the backbone of the DC line and remained popular for decades. But just what was the irresistible appeal of these titles and the editor's contributions?

Examining the basic premises of Weisinger's books, it almost seems as if they were designed by a battery of psychologists.

There was Superboy—every adolescent male's ultimate fantasy. Here a super-powered youngster and his intelligent superdog share fantastic exploits. At home he's supported by doting, elderly parents who encourage his adventurous career.

And Lois Lane and Supergirl were perfect icons for the female audience. The *Lois Lane* title could never quite make up its mind if it was a romance comic or adventure book. The stories ranged from Lois' journalistic efforts to her experiencing strange physical transformations.

A teenage orphan who longed for a loving home and boyfriend, provided much of the appeal in the "Supergirl" feature. At first the Girl of Steel operated in secret, leading up to one of the earliest comics "events" Her cousin Superman revealing her existence to the world.

The Legion revolved around a group of super-powered youngsters; they even had a rocket-ship for a clubhouse! Wow! This provided a futuristic version of "army" and team sports that were staples of American life in those Leave-It-To-Beaver-days.

The stories were as innocent as the times in which they were conceived. But that's not to say in retrospect that there wasn't some subliminal kinkiness.

Me Bizarro!

Superman's imperfect duplicate, Bizarro, debuted in a three-part novel (*Superboy* #68, October, 1958) and met with huge reader reaction. The product of a Duplicator Ray gone haywire, this ersatz Superboy gave the Frankenstein legend a few twists and introduced a new supporting player into the Superman Family.

Response to this one-shot character was so great that Mort transplanted the character to contemporary tales. Once again this 'duplicator ray' was focused on Superman, creating a monstrous, chalk-skinned doppleganger. The two-part story in *Action Comics* #254-255 (July/August, 1959) hearkened to the classic *Bride of Frankenstein* film, as the 'Bizarro-Superman' sought a mate.

Sensing he had something big, Weisinger hastily scheduled Bizarro for more appearances, even cover-featuring him in various Superman Family titles. What began as a sympathetic monster *(Continued on page 24)*

A rare photo of young Mort Weisinger piloting the Albatross, circa 1934-35. Seated to the left of Mort is the captain and owner, Lester Dent, creator of Doc Savage, the man of bronze.

PHOTO COURTESY WILL MURRAY

Mort has often been accused of being misogynistic. The subject of romance was seldom treated with respect. Characters often had relationships with monsters and other grotesqueries; no hint was ever made of the honeymoon night.

The plethora of stories in which Superman is tricked into wedding some scheming female placed marriage on the level of a Fate-Worse Than-Death. Women were painted as predators, and saying "I do" was to be avoided at any cost.

Arguably the most disturbing story ever produced by Weisinger during his heyday is a little epic called "Claire Kent, Alias Super-Sister" (in *Superboy* #78, January 1960).

In this tale the Boy of Steel is transformed into a female, replete with breasts and—we can only assume—all the other female accoutrements. We youngsters, in all our naiveté, could only go "Yuchhh—Superboy's a girl!" The writers and artists must have really gotten a hoot out of this one.

Celebrities, Bad Taste & Boo-Boos

Mort's five-year peak was also noted for episodes of off-the-wall editorial behavior and just plain bad taste. There were "boo-boo contests," which rewarded readers for spotting errors in a story. Weisinger's fascination with celebrities led him to include many Hollywood stars into storylines. And —while this was no fault of Mort's at the time—it is somewhat unsettling to view the *Adventure Comics* cover which features images of future tragic figures President John F. Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, alongside comic Jerry Lewis.

But as goofy and flaky as some of the stories were, Weisinger provided just as many tales that were truly memorable. "Superman's Return to Krypton" featured the hero journeying back in time to home planet Krypton, where he falls into a doomed love affair. "Superman, King of Earth" is a dynamite two-parter about a crazed Man of Steel taking over the world as a ruthless dictator.

And I challenge even the most jaded comics fan to finish Superman #149's "The Death of Superman" with a dry eye. Were these stories maudlin—yes. Juvenilely sentimental—absolutely! But they were sincere, entertaining page-turners, executed with a lot more heart and feeling than many of today's overhyped tragedies.

It's also true that much of what has been written about Mort's personal dealings with writers and artists has been largely uncomplimentary. He was notorious in the DC offices for publicly berating his creative people. He could even be contentious by remote-control. The widow of one of the editor's most popular artists told me that her husband would invariably become livid after speaking to Mort on the phone. While another euphemistically categorized the notorious Weisinger as 'a very complex man.'

Roy Thomas spent a short tenure as Weisinger's assistant until he couldn't take the abuse any longer (see text inset elsewhere in this article). He stayed long enough to outline a Jimmy Olsen juvenile delinquent story and then left for the

Super-Lois and Super-Lana!

Super-Jimmy and Super-Perry too!

Allowing the Man of Steel's supporting cast to gain super powers was too good a plot device for Mort to resist. One of the earliest of his super-Lois epics was the deceptively titled "Lana Lang, Superwoman" (in *Lois Lane* #17, May 1960). In this tale both Lois Lane and her rival, Lana Lang, are powered up through a Superman blood transfusion. The story was so popular that it spawned a semi-sequel in short order in *Lois Lane* #21 (Nov 1960) which featured "The Battle Between Super-Lois and Super-Lana." Super-Lois next appeared in *Action Comics* #278 (Mar 1961) in "The Reversed Super-Powers." Here a slight twist was made, placing Lois in the role of a non-super Superman protector. The convoluted point of these Super-Lois/Super-Lana tales was, ostensibly, that Superman could only marry an invulnerable someone able to survive his enemies' plots and plans.

Lana Lang had been sporadically supercharged ever since her teenage years with the Boy of Steel. In a notable early tale, "The Gravity Girl of Smallville" (in *Adventure Comics* #285, Jun 1961), Lana even donned a clunky lead mask to keep her identity secret from a prying Superboy. Exactly a year later she again flew alongside Superboy in "Lana Lang—Superboy's Sister" in *Adventure Comics* #297 (Jun 1962). In addition to the aforementioned 'Super-Lana/Lois' sagas, she also gained super-strength as an adult in "The Girl Atlas" (*Lois Lane* #12, Oct 1959).

Jimmy Olsen had a super-gig of his own going as Elastic Lad, but also gained Superman—caliber powers at various times. In *Action Comics* #253 (Jun 1959) featuring "The War Between Superman and Jimmy Olsen," not only did Jimmy gain super powers, but a bad attitude as well. He was in a better demeanor in "Superman's Pal of Steel" in *Jimmy Olsen* #34 (Jan 1959). And in "The Super Life of Jimmy Olsen" (*Jimmy Olsen* #50, Jan 1961) he sacrificed his newfound powers to recharge his suddenly non-super pal. Even stolid Perry White got into the mix, assuming the super-guise, Masterman (*Action Comics* #278, Jul 1961) in "The Super-Powers of Perry White." The source of his abilities, an alien tree, was defeated by another Superman staple—Kryptonite.

In typical Weisinger overdoing, even the elderly Ma and Pa Kent and Superboy's pal, Pete Ross, gained super-abilities from time to time. And Clark Kent once had to pretend to have super powers awarded by Lex Luthor (*Action Comics* #257, Oct 1959, "The Reporter of Steel"). Not to be outdone, Luthor himself assumed super-duties in *Action Comics* #298, Mar 1963, in (sigh!) "The Super Powers of Lex Luthor." However, in this offbeat yarn he showed his nobler side by helping Supergirl defeat a group of Phantom Zone villains.

Bizzaro *Continued from page 22*

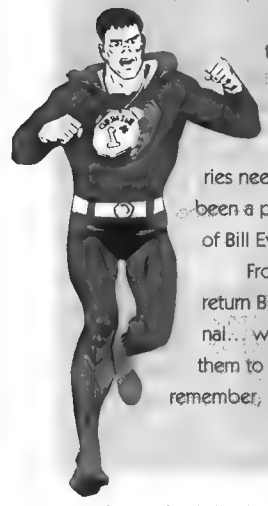
soon evolved into a low-comedy boob, causing more annoying headaches than actual menace.

Ultimately Bizarro won the backup spot in *Adventure Comics* beginning with #285 (June, 1961, "The Shame of the Bizarro World"). The new series, Tales of the Bizarro World, expanded on the mythos by establishing a square planet populated by hundreds of duplicates of the Man of Steel and his friends. There were Bizarro Jimmy Olsens, Lois Lanes, Mr. Mxzyptlks, and virtually every other familiar character.

There was even a Bizarro version of Titano—the super-gorilla with the kryptonite vision. The title of this remarkably weird story remains one of my very favorites ever, "The Kookie Super-Ape" in *Adventure Comics* #295 cover dated April, 1962. (That's the title, honest—no one could make this stuff up!)

The whole joke of this series was that the Bizarros' values and actions worked in reverse of the normal world. For example, Bizarros would eat cold dogs instead of hot dogs; their movies ran in negative form instead of a positive image. To a generation where *MAD Magazine* humor was considered cutting edge, this was funny stuff. Mort even ran a section in his letter cols titled 'Bits of Bizarro Business,' where fans would submit ideas for Bizarro behavior: i.e., Bizarro would keep a lump of coal and throw away a diamond. You would have liked to have seen the things he couldn't run.

The one-joke premise began to wear thin after a short time, and the Bizarros were finally ousted from their *Adventure Comics* berth for the more popular Legion of Super Heroes. And you guessed it—the inevitable Bizarro Legion appeared soon after. They continued to appear in other Superman Family books, but not with the same frequency or popularity as before.



As for art, John Forte was the main penciler on the strip. His stiff, stark drawings were perfectly suited to the "madhouse" atmosphere. As much as Swan and Boring tried, they could never create the necessary weirdness the stories needed to work. (In retrospect, this would have been a perfect feature for someone with the way-out style of Bill Everett or Al Feldstein.)

From time to time modern writers have tried to return Bizarro to the original pathetic creation of the original... with little success. It always seemed too hard for them to resist the cheap humor that older fans fondly remember, ands that newer fans don't seem to appreciate.

more congenial environment of the Marvel bullpen.

Conversely, many staffers were jealous of Mort. He had invested well and earned good money through his considerable DC salary, company stock-options, and freelance writing for several major magazines.

He could afford to socialize with publisher Harry Donenfeld and other execs at expensive NYC night spots (like Twenty-One and the Stork Club). This lifestyle created no small amount of envy and resentment among DC staffers.

Burned Out

Beginning in the mid-1960s, many felt Weisinger's editorial standards began to decline. Readers became more demanding due to the "sophisticated Marvel books" and Mort couldn't quite seem to keep pace. In fact, some have suggested that Thomas' hiring was based (at least in part) to help DC (read Mort) imitate Stan Lee's explosive success.

But Weisinger's attempts to be hip and follow the Batman/Agent 007 camp craze left readers cold. Many longtime fans were also irked by his increasing use of "second-string" artists and inkers.

Weisinger was concentrating more on writing non-fiction articles and books; he seemed to have lost interest in comics. Editorial assistant Nelson Bridwell was left to handle much of the day-to-day work, and tried valiantly to remain enthusiastic.

Even by his own admission, Mort was becoming "burned-out." The story is often told how he would periodically go to publisher Donenfeld and proclaim he had enough and wanted out. Not wanting to lose the man who was successfully managing DC's biggest moneymaker, the executive would eventually talk his editor out of quitting. (A hefty raise often helped, too.)

Ultimately, Weisinger once again went to Donenfeld and said he was leaving. In contrast to previous meeting, this time the publisher wished Mort well and revealed that he was calling it quits as well.

And so it was over. The man who had for decades steered one of the greatest American icons had passed on the torch. Mort had single-handedly overseen his large roster of titles; now his output was divvied up among several DC editors. It was as if no one person could fill his shoes.

While Mort Weisinger's name might seldom be whispered among the industry greats, his contributions to the Superman Legend—and comics as a whole—endures today and should not be overlooked by comic book historians.

Many writers and editors who followed often swore they would never stoop to doing "Mort Weisinger" stories. Yet eventually they would return to his characters and his ideas, borrowing liberally from the rich comics heritage that Weisinger left behind.

Today's comics have grown up, dealing with adult topics and storytelling. But this is one reader who will pick up one of Mort's books, and always find a little bit of wonder and magic in those pages.

The story of the legendary Mort Weisinger

PHOTO COURTESY JOE DESIAS

BY WILL MURRAY

Sergeant Saturn

Twenty years ago, in the Summer of 1976, I squandered a wonderful opportunity when through a mutual friend, I was privileged to spend a few hours at the Great Neck home of the legendary Mort Weisinger, probably the most prolific and influential Superman comics editor ever. With tape recorder in hand I interviewed Mort at length, while he walked me through his photo album of the great and near great.

Unfortunately, my interest in Mort lay in his pulp career and his friendship with Lester Dent, creator of Doc Savage. We only touched upon Superman and his career at DC Comics, which lasted from 1941 to 1970.

Everybody who came into contact with Mort has a favorite story. Some like to tell of his overbearing nature, or repeat the tale of the writer who once attempted to force the 300 pound editor out a DC office window to his doom. The writer's name varies depending on who's telling the story. Weisinger was infamous for rejecting writer's plots, then feeding the rejected plot to the next writer who came to him, offering "his" idea to the next hapless scripter to walk through his door.

My story is different. I met him only that one time, and exchanged a couple of subsequent letters with him, but he treated me very kindly, despite limping around on a bandaged-up gout-stricken foot, proudly showing me some of his earliest professional pulp sales in half-forgotten titles like *Popular Detective* and *Wonder Stories*. It's popular these days to denigrate the Weisinger-era Superman with its reliance on formularized gimmicky plots and cookie-cutter art. Yet his Superman family enjoyed consistent sales today's editors would kill for.

The Mort Weisinger I met was prouder of his extracurricular writing than his comics editing.

"I write for the two largest magazines in America, *Readers Digest* and *Parade*," he told me proudly.

It hadn't always been that way. Weisinger started off as a science fiction fan. While at summer camp, he borrowed a copy of the August, 1928 *Amazing Stories* from his counselor. It was an important issue. The seminal Buck Rogers story, "Armageddon 2419," and the first installment of E.E. Smith's classic "The Skylark of Space" were both featured.

This brought Weisinger into contact with local SF fans, and a new world opened up for him.

Julius Schwartz recalled their memorable first meeting in "My Amazing Story," *Amazing Stories* May, 1993.

"Mort was a lovable kind of kid who had an easy way of making friends. I walked a couple of miles across the Bronx because I didn't have trolley fare and showed up for the meeting in the basement of the house where Mort and his parents lived. As I started down the steps to the door I was stampeded by

a dozen or so other kids tripping over themselves to get out. It almost marked the dissolution of the Scienceers because of Mort's creative bookkeeping.

" 'Well,' Mort explained to me, 'we pay ten cents dues each meeting, y'know, for expenses and to put out a club bulletin called *The Planet,* and when I gave the treasurer's report I announced that there was zero dollars and zero cents in the treasury. I explained that I saw some science fiction magazines and I bought them'—Mort hesitated, looked at the ceiling—'and I went to the movies and I spent the money on a date. I told them I was going to replace it but they got so mad they all stormed out.' "

Schwartz decided to stick around. They were 16, and became fast friends and remained so until the day death separated them.

Together, they launched the first science fiction fanzine, *The Time Traveller,* in 1932, obtaining contributions from such future stars as Jerry Seigel and Forrest J. Ackerman.

Weisinger broke into professional print with "The Price of Peace," a short story first privately published as a fan pamphlet, and later accepted for the November, 1932 *Amazing Stories.* Thus began a writing career that included fiction and non-fiction done under his own name and a collection of anagramical pseudonyms like Ian Rectez and Tom Erwin Geris.

Everytime I pressed a typewriter key, out rolled, "The body fell to the floor with a dull, sickening thud."

Mort Weisinger, who was born on April 25, 1915, had a very specific career goal in mind. He was going be a doctor. Truthfully, it was his father's dream. Applying to NYU, Weisinger majored in journalism, a fact he kept from his father.

"I was 19 at the time, writing my way through college grinding out pseudo-scientific stuff at 1/2¢ a word for *Amazing Stories*, Hugo Gernsback's old *Wonder Stories* and *Secret Agent X.* I wanted to become a surgeon, and fantasy tales were a by-product of my science courses. As a hobby, I edited *The Time Traveller*, the first SF fan magazine. Harry Bates, editor of *Astounding Stories* when Clayton owned the title, used to help me get material for this little sheet (*TTT*), even though he wouldn't buy my stuff. One day he phoned his star contributor, Arthur Burks, and arranged for me to interview him. And that is why I never became a doctor.

"I'll never forget the impression meeting Burks made on my unprofessional soul. He had just received his mail and slit open an envelope that contained 12 fat checks. Art let me soak up the glamour of his studio, talked shop, and invited me to call often. Months later, when I became eligible for membership in the American Fiction Guild, he signed me up, brought me to one of their luncheons. Mixing with the writers, editors and agents there I wised up, organized a part-time agency of my own, handling science fiction only."

This was the Solar Sales Service. Weisinger's partner in the venture was Julius Schwartz, later through interesting convolutions of fate, to succeed him as editor of *Superman.* SSS clients included H. P. Lovecraft, Henry Kuttner, Robert Bloch, Edmond Hamilton and their most famous discovery, Stanley G. Weinbaum.

The pair had many divergent paths to follow before converging again, as Weisinger recalled.

"It was while hustling for my clients in and out of editorial offices that I met Leo Margulies, chief at Standard Magazines. A short while later one of Leo's associate editors left, leaving him in a hole. He hired me to plug the dike. I went after my degree at night, and eventually decided that the only surgery I'd ever do would be cutting excess wordage on overwritten manuscripts."

Shortly thereafter, Margulies purchased *Wonder Stories,* renaming it *Thrilling Wonder Stories.* That magazine would be Weisinger's main responsibility. The year was 1935. He was 20, and already an operator. *Wonder Stories* editor Charles Hornig was supposed to continue editing the new version of *Wonder,* but Weisinger fast-talked Margulies into dumping Hornig, leaving him in full control.

His duties weren't limited to SF. With fellow editors Jack Schiff and Bernard Breslauer, both of whom would later follow him to DC Comics, Weisinger took turns editing titles ranging from *The Phantom Detective* to *Thrilling Love Stories.* For *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, he naturally purchased tales through the Solar Sales Service, which he had left in Julie Schwartz' capable hands.

Standard had a bizarre system. In order for a story to be bought, three associate editors had to approve the purchase. Since he was the only person on staff familiar with science fiction, the other two editors soon learned to defer to his judgement. And so Mort beat the system. As he frequently would.

Mort was first and foremost an idea man. One of his tasks at Standard was to write stories written around covers. Out of this sometimes frustrating duty he began thinking about covers. Then rethinking them.

"In those days we weren't as much into covers as we are today," he told me. "The cover would be more or less symbolic of subtle violence. So we didn't have to sync the cover and the novel. So they could write anything more or less. We'd show a knife pointing at the hero or something like that. And later when I found out what publishing was about and I realized that sales could be hooked to covers, I started this whole evolution in the industry. Think of the cover first, and get a story written around it. Instead of waiting 'til it's all done and painting yourself into a corner, and ask, what is my cover going to be? That, was my creative contribution to the whole field."

This pulp sales technique would later reshape how DC comic books were packaged and marketed.

"It was the greatest training ground in the world," Weisinger recalled to me. "Practically all our writers made it in Hollywood. George Bruce. Steve Fisher. Frank Gruber. Richard Sale. Sale went on to do a hell of a lot of good pictures. Leigh Brackett. I was the one who introduced her to Ed Hamilton, whom she married. But she did a lot of John Wayne pictures. She's done some *Rockford Files.* She did *Hatari.* She did *Rio Bravo.*"

Still, it was a grind. Standard published the largest string of pulps at that time, including love, western and sports titles. Each editor was

required to be proficient in every genre. Margulies often purchased rejects at sub-standard rates. Weisinger, Schiff and other so-called "trained seals" were expected to revise them in-house. The pay was not wonderful.

"The only world my friends and I knew was pulp," Weisinger once lamented. "Every time I pressed a typewriter key, out rolled, 'The body fell to the floor with a dull, sickening thud.'"

Still, there were bright moments. Weisinger was allowed to start a companion to *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. He called it *Startling Stories*, after a fictitious pulp magazine mentioned in one of his own stories.

Then came Captain Future.

Weisinger convinced Margulies to attend the First World Science Fiction Convention, held in New York City in July, 1939. Margulies, impressed by SF fans, blurted, "I didn't know you fans could be so damn sincere." On the spot, he promised them a new magazine built around an SF hero.

It fell to Weisinger to concoct the details. Cribbing ideas from Doc Savage and elsewhere, he came up with a mutant superman initially dubbed Mr. Future. Some of these ideas, including the hero's robot double and shape-shifting pet, would later find their way into Weisinger's Superman and Legion of Super-Heroes mythos.

Under the pen name of Sergeant Saturn, Weisinger wrote juvenile editorials for his SF magazines that became infamous as the field matured.

Then came the offer that would lift him out of the pulp jungle. While at Standard, he had worked with a curly-haired writer named Whitney Ellsworth on *The Phantom Detective*. Ellsworth had been an early comics editor, did publicity in Hollywood, then drifted into pulp writing. Somehow, Ellsworth was lured back by the new owners of the comics house he had once quit—the renamed DC Comics—as editorial director.

Ellsworth promptly hired Weisinger as associate editor. This was on the recommendation of Superman creator, Jerry Seigel, whom Weisinger knew from early SF fandom. He was given a desk, a typewriter and instructions to create three new characters.

The result was Aquaman, Johnny Quick and Green Arrow, who populated *More Fun* and enjoyed long existences in and out of their own magazines.

Weisinger joined National in the latter months of 1940. His duties were varied, and included some involvement with the *Superman* radio show that debuted the previous February.

"It was a very good job and it paid so well that I shelved all thoughts of ever doing any extra-curricular writing," Weisinger recalled in his 1944 *Writer's Digest* article, "A Yank at Yale." "I was in a golden rut, and I would still be enjoying it if it weren't for the fact that two years later they picked a capsule with my number in it out of a fishbowl."

Staff Sergeant Weisinger

In "I Write From 0800 to 1800" *Writer's Digest* April 1943, Weisinger told it this way: "One morning late last July when the mailbox disgorged a letter to me conveying greetings from the president, I taxied to my office, cleared the decks for my successor, and kissed my typewriter and secretary goodbye for the duration."

His successor was no less than Jack Schiff, whom Weisinger installed for the duration—with the tacit understanding that Schiff would relinquish the job once Weisinger was mustered out of the service. Weisinger found Army life surprisingly agreeable.

He was given a desk, a typewriter and instructions to create three new characters. The result was Aquaman, Johnny Quick and Green Arrow!

"Five-forty-five A.M. reveille at Camp Dix two weeks thereafter was a pleasure," he boasted in "A Yank at Yale." "It was the first morning in nine years that I didn't have to worry about a deadline, a caption, a missing piece of copy, or a drunken writer.

A magazine to me now was merely a storage place for ammunition, and a typewriter was slang for a machine gun."

At first, Weisinger was assigned to Cook and Baker School, but he sweet-talked the secretary to a high-ranking officer into getting a transfer to a more glamorous post at Yale, where his editorial skills could shine.

"One stunt I particularly enjoyed was getting Superman to come to Yale—literally. I dreamed up a rough outline for a story wherein Clark (Superman) Kent gets assigned to investigate training conditions at the AAF School at Yale for his paper. Whit Ellsworth came up here for the story conference, kicked the plot around until we had ironed out all the wrinkles. The finished product was a "Keep 'em Flying" story that has Superman proving that the job of the ground crew technician can be just as glamorous as flying a P-38 through enemy ack-ack."

"I Sustain the Wings" appeared in *Superman* #25. It was one of the very few times Weisinger scripted a comics story. The title came from an Air Force radio show he wrote for Glenn Miller.

It was while in the army that Staff Sergeant Weisinger met a registered nurse named Thelma Rudnick. They met on a train. Impulsively, Weisinger proposed en route. They were married on September, 27, 1943.

Returning from the war, he took his place beside Jack Schiff, who was asked to stay on. They switched off editing the Superman and Batman family of magazines.

But Weisinger was not happy sharing power. He wanted his own little fiefdom, according to Schiff.

"I have a long letter of (Mort's) from when he was on vacation once, in which he he laid out a detailed plan of a Red Team and a Blue Team. And then we'd switch around because we both knew all the characters. I think he broached it to the front office and they didn't like the idea. But he was determined to break away and be on his own."

(Continued on page 68)

TWO WEEKS WITH MORT WEISINGER

A Reminiscence by Roy Thomas

Since ... was one of Mort Weisinger's ... though mainly "bascom" is the word I'd have used ... I felt it was high time I exorcised a few demons in writing about him for this issue of *Comic Book Marketplace*.

Back in literally '65, comics fandom, Marvel, even Superman titles, clearly aimed at a younger audience were rarely taken seriously and rarely discussed in fanzines. *Alter Ego* for instance, devoted a lot of space to the Justice Society and Captain Marvel but precisely none to the superhero who'd started it all.

Because I corresponded from 1960-65 with DC's Jim Schwartz, I knew Jim and Mort had been friends since Jim published one of the very first science fiction fanzines back in the '30s, but I knew little else about Mort. Still, when it was eventually announced by Jim Setter in Superman — concerning Jerry Siegel's Mort Weisinger to Love Lois Lane — I remember feeling a bit torn down the middle. On the one hand, I could judge no less than

Mort offered me a starting salary of $110 a week (I think what I was then making as a teacher) and a two month trial period. I borrowed and read a box full of Superman scripts, bought a new suit — and was very eager for summer.

During that time I spoke only once with Mort on the phone. One day he called me at school and, as it is like for a person I can't recall, all I remember is his speaking of "the Superman mythology." By then I'd come to respect, at least to a certain extent, what he was doing with the two Superman books, with more emphasis on continuity, explorations and all those tales of Kryptonite.

At his invitation, I also wrote a couple of sketch stories about Superman and Superboy for him, since I'd be paid a little more than the usual eight, but Mort and I were impossible with each other by then. Short sentences were the best I could muster when I got to New York. I was paid a $50 advance to help pay for the flight to New York.

... so on the first Tuesday in June, I arrived in Manhattan at the ... of a ... and ... and ... and

(With no explanation, my salary had now become $100 a week instead of $110. When I asked what had happened to the extra $10, he said, with a contemptuous nod toward Wilson's space down the hall that he assumed explained everything, "I won't pay you more than I'm paying that idiot.")

(Likewise with any explanation the two months that passed had become two weeks—tick-tock time. Bright about then, I felt around surreptitiously in my hip-pocket for that gold Gillette razor blade I was still there.)

Still, the job was easy, so I determined to make the best of it. This was 1976, after all! This was the comics biz, where I'd always wanted to work—even when not consciously thinking about it.

Since I'd made no real plans for my life, I figured I'd stay at Marvel for the duration. Washington Irving once said, "Time is money spent." I agreed with him, and the irony that I'd chosen the name George Washington Duncan as my pen name for the first few years I was there was not lost on me. After being shown the Marvel bullpen, I was assigned to my desk, to begin work immediately. One part of my memory (the next morning,

Wilson was proud of that word, always in the extravagant sense of the word. He dressed like a rajah, and his every habit and mannerism, even though it showed a certain panache in the first instance, had become tiresome. I was trying to figure out how to get fired double-quick when he was going to promote me to be a freelancer, which is what he had in mind for me. (In classic corporate office-speak, the managing editor, Jack Abbey, who's seemingly forgotten my name, refers to me as "the new guy." Even after I've been here a month, he still calls me "the new guy.")

Abbey was a tall, thin, bespectacled man with a pencil-thin mustache and a perpetually pained expression. He was a Mormon, and he was very much a company man. He was also a fine writer, and I'd been impressed with the work he'd done on the Marvel Bicentennial Special, a 76-page tribute to the history of the United States that had been published in 1975. Abbey was a Mormon, and he was very much a company man. He was also a fine writer, and I'd been impressed with the work he'd done on the Marvel Bicentennial Special, a 76-page tribute to the history of the United States that had been published in 1975.

THOMAS ON WEISINGER *Continued from page 29*

voice could drip scorn as if it were a venom he produced from overactive glands. And, with his looming, perhaps 300 pound frame, he was physically intimidating as well. I once described him as a "malevolent toad," and while that was unkind, it truly represented the way I felt at the time. Years later, when I saw Jabba the Hut in *Return of the Jedi*, I thought of Mort, and smiled.

When I proofread a Superman story and missed a typo on a long, fictitious nation-name the second time it appeared in a balloon, he was scathing. (I was not allowed to forget that he had fired "that idiot" because of inadequate proofreading; still, I had missed the misspelling.) When I did find a typo or minor error that was in any way debatable, he would sneer and grunt, "chickenshit. You know, in the army we had a word for stuff like this: chickenshit."

When he wanted me a buzzer sounded and I was off like a shot. I quickly developed a Pavlovian reaction of tenseness when that buzzer went off.

My desk in the three-person office was several doors down the hall from Mort's, so when he wanted me a buzzer sounded and I was off like a shot. I quickly developed a Pavlovian reaction of tenseness when that buzzer went off.

My first day on staff, he flashed a four-figure check from the Sunday supplement magazine *Parade* for his "Bonanza, USA" column, to show me he was a writer of a magnitude far beyond the reach of most mortals. (I was to learn later that, at least during those years, he showed such a check to everyone who applied to him for a job, and many who didn't.)

And yet, at the same time, Mort tried in his own way to be ingratiating and helpful:

He introduced me to Irwin Donenfeld in the hall one day, telling DC's publisher that I "came from the fanzines," which was the only hint I ever had that he'd hired me for that reason rather than because of the letters I wrote to him and Julie.

When I suggested that, in one story script, we should see more than just Clark, Lois, and Jimmy in Perry White's hospital room to indicate that there were more than three reporters on the Daily Planet staff, he harrumphed at me—but later showed me he'd rewritten a balloon to have Perry explain why only those three were there.

When I pointed out in newly-turned-in artwork that, if a boulder on a hillside opened at a special touch, we shouldn't really see the words "Secret Lab" written on an arrow pointing inside, he grumped again—but a day later he called me into his office to show me, almost proudly, that he'd had the arrow and words removed. Now we simply caught a glimpse of the secret lab when the boulder opened.

He let me in on a little secret—in a few months a Batman show would debut on TV and I might want to buy some NPP stock to own a piece of DC at that time.

I realize, looking back on what I've written here, that I possibly haven't really made Mort Weisinger look like the ogre that so many of us actually thought him. I believe this is partly because it was often his manner more than his words that browbeat me and others—partly because, in spite of all, I respected Mort who'd had the puppeteer's skill to develop the "Superman mythology" while using several different scripters.

And yet, I can clearly recall at least one evening, sitting alone in my room at the G. W. Hotel, having tears well in my eyes after a particularly bruising day with Mort, and wondering if I could take it—if my dream of working in comics was going to end with my being let go by Mort, a la Nelson, at the end of my second paid week.

Let me stress that being Mort's assistant wasn't my first job. Through much of high school and college I'd worked at a local movie theatre. I'd sung in a rock 'n' roll band on weekends for two years for pin money. I'd spent four years as an English teacher, working under principals neither I nor anyone else I knew really like or respected. I was no total babe in the woods, who crumpled at the first hint of criticism from an employer.

But verbal sadism was something else.

It all ended very suddenly, and I won't go into it in undue detail here. Suffice it to say that, without really quite intending to apply for a job at the much smaller Marvel Comics, I found myself on Friday, July 9th—the last day of my one paid, four-day week on staff at DC—sitting in the office of Stan Lee a ten-minute walk from Mort's office, and being asked what it would take to hire me away from National. "Just offer me what Mort promised me," I answered, meaning $110 a week. When Stan did, I accepted—and yeah, I'd have jumped for the $100 a week I was actually getting, too.

I told Stan that, in fairness to Mort, I'd have to give him time to hire a replacement, and Stan reluctantly accepted. So I trekked back to DC, having taken an extra half hour on my lunch break.

(In the elevator as I was leaving for lunch, I'd run into Ed Eisenberg, who'd said a few delicately-phrased words of encouragement about "hanging in there," a clear reference that he knew what I was going through. That he had given me a boost, even though I felt guilty about the fact that I was sneaking off to an appointment with Stan Lee.)

I was no sooner back at my desk than the buzzer sounded and I trudged down, not eagerly, to Mort's office. To my amazement, he went into a little speech about how Eisenberg and Julie and maybe one or two others had spoken to him about being a bit too hard on me, with vague hints of a possible

change. (Later I would learn that it was suggested he ease up on me, as I didn't seem the type to "take it" forever as Nelson had. Whoever spoke those words, had sized me up pretty accurately.)

Interrupting Mort politely, I told him that I very much appreciated what he was saying, but it was all a bit academic now, as I had accepted a job offer from Stan Lee.

Mort seemed stunned. At least that's how I interpreted his glare.

I suggested he re-hire Nelson, since he seemed to be able to accept the way Mort treated him, while I would not.

Mort said nothing.

I told him that I'd stay as long as he needed to find a replacement, even if it was for several weeks.

Mort ordered me out of the building immediately, declaring I was "a spy for Stan Lee."

I rose, said I was sorry things had worked out this way, and left.

Back in the far office, I began picking up the handful of personal items in my desk. Jack Miller wasn't there, but for the first time since we'd been introduced, his assistant looked over at me and asked, "What are you doing?"

I told her I was clearing out my desk because I'd accepted a job with Stan Lee.

That was the day I learned that it's not always an exaggeration when people say that someone's "jaw dropped."

A few minutes later I was gone. I had a passing thought to say good-bye to Julie, maybe Eisenberg, but I didn't want to take the chance of encountering a glowering Weisinger.

I left, after suggesting to Mort that he hire Nelson back; I said he was better than Mort thought, and perhaps he was willing to take a kind of treatment that I wasn't. (Mort did re-hire Nelson almost immediately, not that I imagine my recommendation had much to do with it.)

Ten minutes later I was back at Marvel's four little offices, and talking with Stan about scripting an already-drawn Millie the Model story over the weekend.

That night, by coincidence, I stayed overnight at Otto Binder's house in Englewood, New Jersey. Otto, the soul of kindness, gave me a pep talk about how "everybody" felt more or less about Mort the way I did, even those who had known him for years—except perhaps Julie, who had a special relationship with him going back so many years. He told me I'd done the right thing. He felt Mort was a frustrated fiction writer, which was why he liked to brandish those big checks from *Parade Magazine*—to demonstrate that he, too, was a writer.

I ran into Mort only once or twice after that.

Only a week or so later, at one of the first comics conventions, at the Broadway Central Hotel in lower Manhattan, Mort showed up and gave an impromptu speech during a panel composed of Bill Finger and Gardner Fox. To my discomfited astonishment, he spoke of the fanzines as being the place where comics companies were going to look for future talent—quite a statement, considering how, as he'd stated that Friday, I'd "betrayed" him by taking DC's money and "using it to get to New York to go to work for Stan Lee." The two of us never let our eyes meet that day.

Some months afterward, I heard that he had told people I still owed DC repayment for that $50 advance… though I'm positive I placed a check to him in the mail not long after I went to work for Marvel. (Incidentally, about a year later, a totally rewritten form of that story appeared in *Jimmy Olsen*, with no byline for me—and it had been expanded by 50% or more in page length, just as I'd asked Mort to do earlier.)

It was perhaps a year or so later that I encountered him again at the funeral of someone in the comics field, but once more we avoided each other. I wanted to go over and talk to him, to put my hand out and say I respected him even though I'd felt I could go on working for him when another opportunity reared its head—but I didn't. I couldn't. I wish I had, even if I still suspected that he'd have turned his back on me.

A few years later, he retired.

Some time after that, I heard he had died.

And I was sorry.

Mort ordered me out of the building… declaring I was "a spy for Stan Lee."

Though it was pros like Gardner Fox and Otto Binder and especially Julie Schwartz who had encouraged me in my half-formed hopes of entering the comics field, it was after all Mort Weisinger who'd actually taken the step of hiring me.

Though it was under Stan Lee at Marvel that I would find my greatest professional success, it was Mort who had brought me to New York so that, by a juxtaposition of fortunate circumstances, I would be on the spot when Stan was looking for a new writer.

The years haven't appreciably altered my view that Mort had a sadistic streak, that he enjoyed being cruel to those who worked under him, be they assistant editors, artists, or writers.

Yet, at the same time, the decades have increased my appreciation of Mort Weisinger as an important and in many ways positive figure in the field.

Both as official editor in the 1960s and quasi-anonymously for years before as de facto editor serving under Whitney Ellsworth, Weisinger did indeed develop a "Superman mythology" which, if it perhaps owed a bit to the Marvel Family milieu of the 1940s, very definitely led in the direction that the field was destined to take for some years to come. It was around this same time, for instance, that students in college magazines began to write about Stan Lee's "Marvel mythology"—and Julie Schwartz' magazines likewise had a distinctive feel that advanced the comics industry.

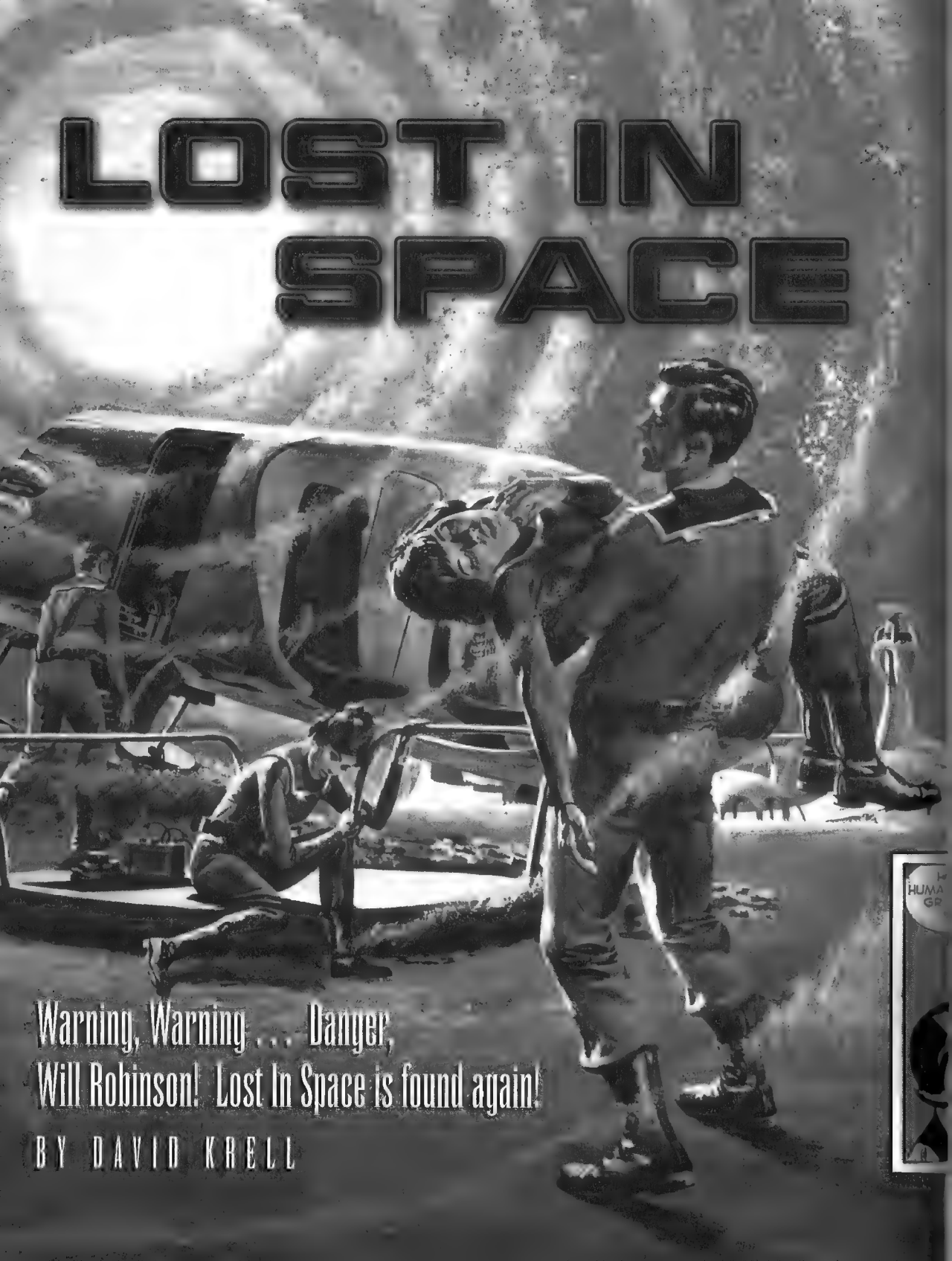
Mort Weisinger, for all his human flaws (and we all have them), was a giant in the field.

I honor him for what he accomplished, and I thank him posthumously (as I often wished I could have thanked him personally) for bringing me into comics.

I only wish I could have liked him.

Or vice versa.

LOST IN SPACE



Warning, Warning . . . Danger, Will Robinson! Lost In Space is found again!

BY DAVID KRELL

Space Craze

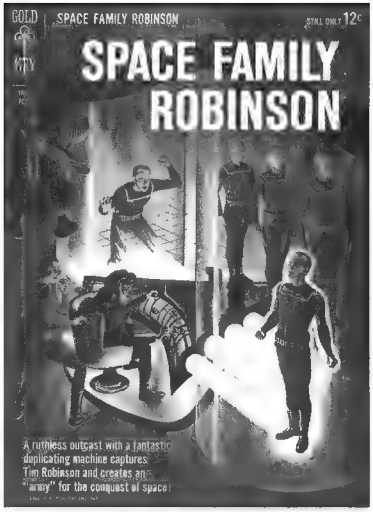
In 1958, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) evolved from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). NASA's main mission consisted of beating the Russians in the so-called 'space race.' This was no easy task as the Russians succeeded in placing the first man-made object in orbit in 1957, the satellite Sputnik I.

And so was born Project Mercury, a massive undertaking involving the selection of America's best and brightest to be star voyagers or 'astronauts' who soon became household names, e.g., John Glenn, Alan Shepard.

As with many sociological indicators and current events, television heavily reflected America's fascination with space in the 1960s.

The Flintstones added the wise-cracking, diminutive alien Gazoo (voiced by Harvey Korman). *I Dream of Jeannie* focused on every man's fantasy, a beautiful, bodacious blonde to grant wishes and commands. Only the protagonist was no everyman… he was Captain (later Major) Anthony Nelson, a NASA astronaut.

Of course, the granddaddy of them all was really nothing more than *Wagon Train* in space. *Star Trek* followed the voyages of the starship U.S.S. Enterprise in the 23rd Century, voyages which adhered to its mission to "...boldly go where no man has gone before."


GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
STILL ONLY 12¢
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
A ruthless outcast with a fantastic duplicating machine captures Tim Robinson and creates an "army" for the conquest of space!

Space Family Robinson #6 (Feb 1964) was the first issue to feature the water-world adventures of Rex Venture and his engineer, Scotty Mackay (yes, Scotty!).

But approximately one year before the debut of Star Trek, a futuristic version of a classic piece of 19th century literature captured audiences' imaginations. *Lost in Space* was a space-age version of *Swiss Family Robinson*, Johann David Wyss' story of a shipwrecked family who creates an existence and domesticates an island where they survive and thrive. *Swiss Family Robinson* is a literary classic, practically mandated reading in elementary school. (The writer recalls reading "SFR" in sixth grade, a first foray into classic literature.) Its well-known story with a space motif made good sense.

OW COULD THOSE OIDS VANISH INTO THE UND WITHOUT ANY IGN OF HOLES?
I THINK THE HOLES ARE HIDDEN BY TRAP DOORS AND GROWING PLANTS, TAM!
IF THEY APPEAR AGAIN, WE'LL TRY TO MAKE FRIENDS!
SUPPOSING THEY DON'T WANT TO MAKE FRIENDS, CRAIG? THIS WHOLE PLANET SEEMS SO SAVAGE—SO UNFRIENDLY!

March of Comics #404 (1969) was the fourth of five Space Family Robinson shoe store giveaway issues. Each 16-page mini-size issue contains a single story plus puzzle and game pages... and measures 5" wide by 6 1⅛" tall.

Pitching an idea in shorthand like "Swiss Family Robinson in space" to networks and studios is common. As an example, when super-programmer Brandon Tartikoff led NBC to ratings dominance in the 1980s, he inspired *Miami Vice* with the phrase "MTV cops."

However, the history of the *Lost in Space* franchise is a bit more complex. Long-held theories about the show's genesis are no longer valid and can be qualified, to say the least.

Space Family Robinson

Gold Key published the comic book series entitled *Space Family Robinson* (the first issue dated December 1962) which ran from 1962-1978. "Lost in Space" served as the title of the first story in issue #2. Further, Gold Key began using the "Lost In Space" subtitle on the cover beginning with issue #15 (January 1966), only a few months after the show's debut in September 1965.

It's well known among comic book collectors that the first issue apparently had distribution problems... hence it is tough-to-find, especially in high grade. In fact, because the comics were so well read, high grade copies of any issue are scarce, with the last few issues being virtually impossible to locate in grade. The low value in *Overstreet* for these last issues (only $1 in FN) seems inconsistent with their hard-to-get status.

After the show's cancellation in 1968, Gold Key slightly altered the title to read *Space Family Robinson: Lost in Space on Space Station One*.

Del Connell created "Space Family Robinson" for Gold Key. His version consisted of parent scientists Craig and June and their two teenagers, Tim and Tam, as America's first family in space circa 2001. Also included were their pets, parrot Yakker and dog Clancy, the latter an inspiration from Connell's family dog. Basically, the family lived on Earth's first space station and encountered aliens and adventures in the theretofore unknown universe when a "violent cosmic explosion rocks their experimental home."

The comic book rumor mill often promotes the idea that Disney-duck artist Carl Barks created "SFR," but the facts seem to contravene this popular misconception. Ed Shifres (author of *Space Family Robinson: The True Story*, a 1996 exposé on the background of *Lost in Space*) wrote to Carl Barks personally and received a letter dated November 6, 1991 which supports Connell as the creator and clarifies the comic book's origin.

"First off, my connection to the Gold Key *Space Family Robinson* comic book stories was zero. I neither wrote the stories nor drew any of the artwork. I believe Del Connell, one of Gold Key's editors was the writer. My name has gotten hooked into the folklore of the series creation by the fact that I wrote a one-line suggestion to editor Chase Craig around 1960-61 to the effect that Gold Key should do a comic book version of *Swiss Family Robinson* and title it *Space Family Robinson*.

"It was just an idea that popped into my head. I had never heard of any use of the title in TV or anywhere else."

Since *Lost in Space* aired soon after the comic book's debut, one can easily and quite logically assume the setting of "Space Family Robinson" and the usage of the "Lost in Space" name indicates a story nexus between the comic book and the television show. Amazingly, such is not the case... there was no connection.

In Shifres' book, Connell explains Gold Key's creative borrowing of the *Lost in Space* title on a regular basis simply capitalized on the show's success and good will.

"After the TV show got going and was getting publicity, it was decided to add 'Lost in Space' to our 'Space Family Robinson' title. I believe it was our Eastern office that made this decision, thinking that the addition of the TV show's name might increase sales of our book. I didn't like the idea, but the decision was made."

In addition, Shifres notes another futuristic take on the Wyss tale of a stranded family with a tie to the comic book.

Hilda Bohem wrote a script entitled "Swiss Family 3000," commissioned by Bud Groskopf, Director of Business Affairs at CBS in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Groskopf sought entry into the producing arena and envisioned futuristic versions of classic stories, his two primary ideas being takeoffs on Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson. Using Bohem's name would protect Groskopf from any apparent conflict of interest.

When Groskopf learned of Western's *Space Family Robinson* under the Gold Key banner, he approached the comic book company (through Bohem) about live-action

GD-FN-NM Prices

Regular series prices taken from *The Guide* (*OCBP Update* #1). *March of Comics* prices taken from *Overstreet Annual* #27 (1997). All prices have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

Space Family Robinson			
#1 (Low Distr)	$22	$66	$240
#2	$10	$29	$105
#3-10	$5	$15	$55
#11-14	$3	$9	$35
Lost In Space			
#15-20	$3	$9	$35
#21-36	$2	$6	$20
Lost In Space on Space Station One			
#37-48	$2	$5	
#49-59	$1	$3	
March Of Comics			
#320 & 328	$13	$40	$90
#404	$10	$30	$65
#414	$8	$25	$55

rights to "SFR," presumably to avoid potential litigation over his *Swiss Family 3000* feature film. Luckily, a fraternity brother's family owned Western! Groskopf secured the rights and his project (and dream) appeared to be all systems go. But a conflict delayed the project's launch.

Irwin Allen sought to procure the title "Space Family Robinson" from Western Publishing (parent company of Gold Key) for a TV show he was producing at the time. When that avenue resulted in a dead end, Allen decided to use the *Lost in Space* moniker for his project.

After learning about Allen's television show for CBS, Groskopf (again through Bohem) took legal action and reached a settlement with the producer and the network for some $20,000, according to Groskopf. At the request of his friend, Mel Benstead (the aforementioned fraternity brother), Groskopf and Bohem returned the live-action rights to Western now somewhat useless due to Allen's project.

Once fans and hobbyists have completed their Gold Key *Lost in Space* comic book collections, there's still more. In 1991, Innovation Comics distributed a *Lost in Space* series and Dark Horse is releasing a series concurrent with the *Lost in Space* feature film that everyone is so excited about.

Whose Show Is It Anyway?

Lost in Space appears to predate the *Space Family Robinson* comic book, according to Shifres who theorizes the real inspiration behind the television show was not disaster movie king Irwin Allen (*The Poseidon Adventure, The Towering Inferno*), but rather a science fiction writer named Ib Melchior (*Robinson Crusoe on Mars*).

Shifres contends the "LIS" pilot parallels, to a fantastic degree, a treatment prepared by Ib Melchior circa 1960 entitled "Space Family Robinson," unrelated to the comic book of the same name. As such, he disputes Allen's credit as the creator of *Lost in Space*.

Although similarities will undoubtedly exist because both stories rely on a well-known tale in the public domain, Shifres offers some interesting items.

Melchior's special effects expert, David Hewitt (*The Time Travelers*), wrote a script entitled "The Wizard of Mars." At the suggestion of his financial backers, he met with Felix Feist, a television director who worked with Irwin Allen on the series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and *Lost in Space*.

When Hewitt mentioned Melchior's space project, Feist reacted curiously. In an interview conducted for *Space Family Robinson: The True Story*, Hewitt details the course of events.

"I told Felix Feist about my work on *The Time Travelers* and that Ib Melchior had written *Space Family Robinson*, and told him of my special effects for that project. He was surprised to hear this. He was working for Irwin Allen at the time and told

Variety reviews *Lost In Space*

The September 22, 1965 issue of *Variety* heralded the special effects while discounting the characters.

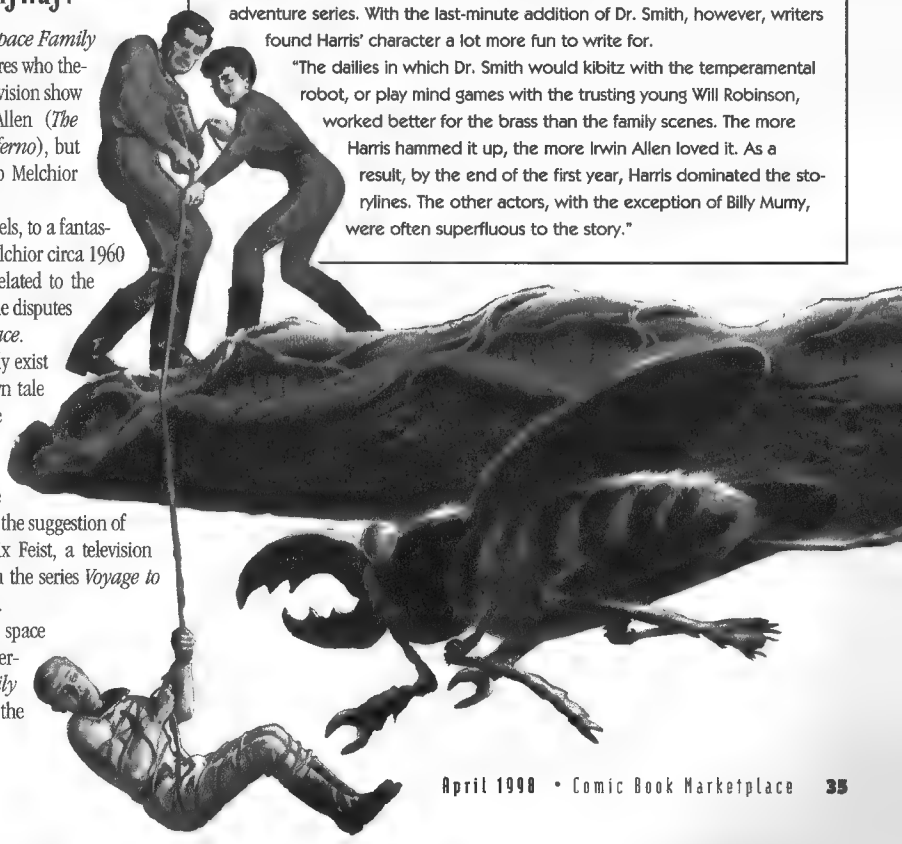
"For the young set, and those who like their science fiction no matter how simple the characters and plot lines, *Lost in Space* looks like a winner. The opener was as up to date as the last space shot and then some.

"Created and produced by Irwin Allen, under the banner of 20th-Fox, the big credit in this hour-long space series, goes to L.B. Abbott and Howard Lydecker, who did the special photographic effects. These effects included a walk in space, a rain of meteors striking a space craft, an up to date Frankenstein in the form of a robot, and a man lost in the wild expanse of yet to be explored universes."

Jonathan Harris' Zachary Smith character proved to have the most appeal, an issue with which other cast members did not harmonize. In the compendium "Science Fiction Television Series," Mark Phillips and Frank Garcia provide some background on an all too familiar backstage tale.

"When Guy Williams and June Lockhart signed up for *Lost in Space*, it was understood that they would be the stars, and their show would be a serious adventure series. With the last-minute addition of Dr. Smith, however, writers found Harris' character a lot more fun to write for.

"The dailies in which Dr. Smith would kibitz with the temperamental robot, or play mind games with the trusting young Will Robinson, worked better for the brass than the family scenes. The more Harris hammed it up, the more Irwin Allen loved it. As a result, by the end of the first year, Harris dominated the storylines. The other actors, with the exception of Billy Mumy, were often superfluous to the story."



me to come to the 20th Century Fox lot where he was directing a segment of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. He said I would be very surprised at what was on the walls of one of the buildings that Irwin Allen was in.

"I went to 20th and again met Felix. He told me to go to a special building and told me if anybody asked me what I was doing there, I was to tell them I was looking for him. The walls in the hallway were covered with story boards and large color paintings—all of which were similar to Ib's script."

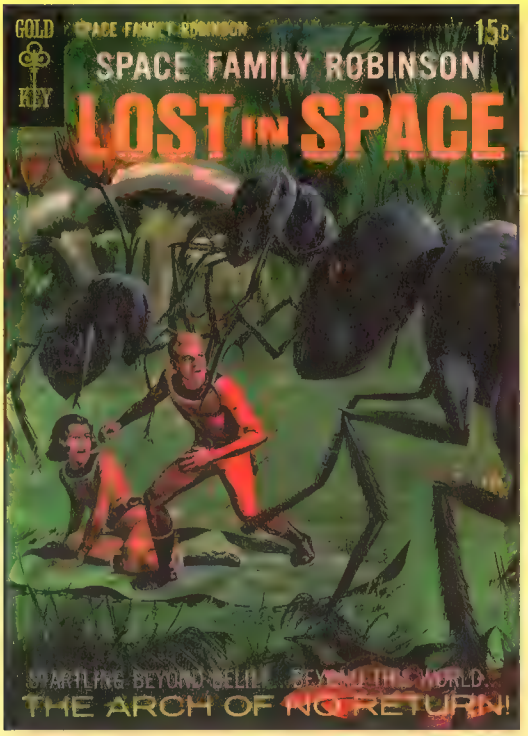
Shifres also notes (according to a "reliable yet unnamed" source) at least two crew members were aware of Melchior's script. "One of them, an uncredited special effects man, claimed (off the record) that Irwin Allen per-

(Continued on page 47)

Although the last four issues (#59 at right) were published in the early 1980s and contained reprinted material, they are difficult to find in high-grade.

▼ #14 Oct 1965

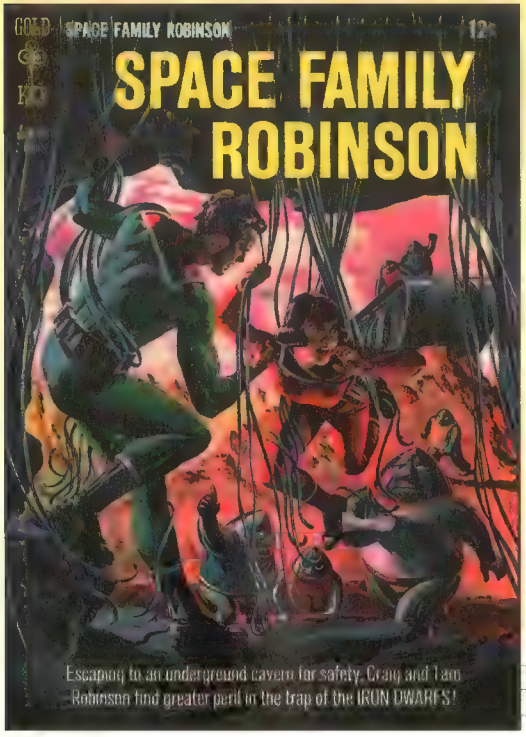
ALL SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON/LOST IN SPACE COVERS & PINUPS © WESTERN PUBLISHING



▲ #33 Apr 1969 ▼ #12 Apr 1965

GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
LOST IN SPACE
An emergency landing plunges the Robinsons into the grasp of SPACE GIANTS!

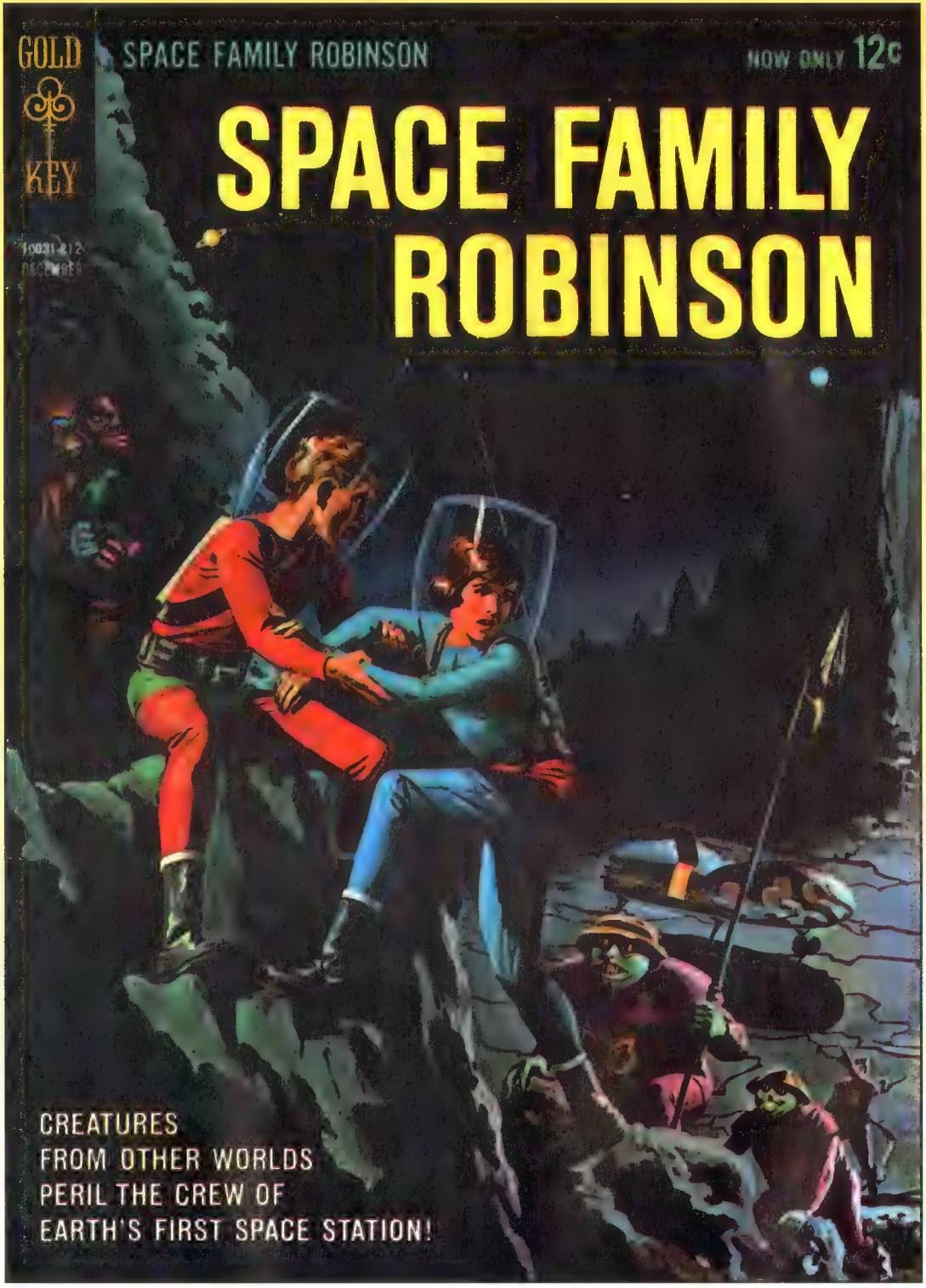
▲ #35 Aug 1969 ▼ #26 Feb 1968


GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
12
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
Escaping to an underground cavern for safety, Craig and Tam Robinson find greater peril in the trap of the IRON DWARFS!

▲ #29 Aug 1968 ▼ #16 Apr 1966

▲ #27 Apr 1968 ▼ #28 Jun 1968

GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
12¢
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
LOST IN SPACE
The Robinsons live a nightmare as space prisoners change their shapes and take over the space station!

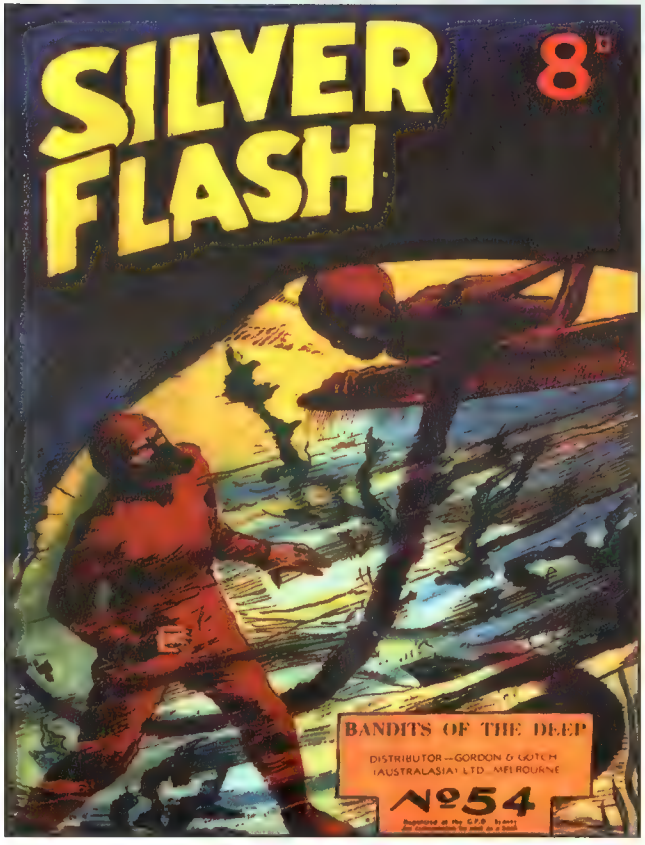

GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
NOW ONLY 12¢
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
CREATURES
FROM OTHER WORLDS
PERIL THE CREW OF
EARTH'S FIRST SPACE STATION!

▼ #1 Dec 1962

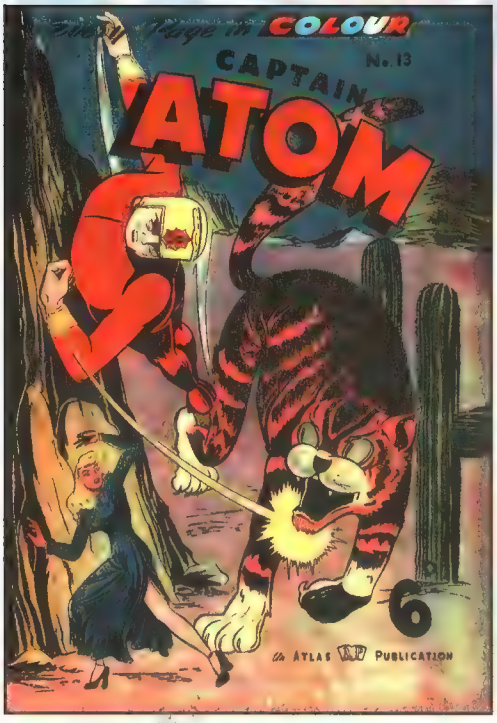
▲ #10 Dec 1964 ▼ #7 Apr 1964

▲ #6 Feb 1964 ▼ #9 Aug 1964

Treasure Planet, by Noel Cook, is one of the sought after Aussie science fiction comics. **King Size Comic** (#32 shown here) featured, among others, Silver Starr and Frank Frazetta's Johnny Comet daily strip. The Stanley Pitt rendered **Silver Starr** (#2 shown here) is as good if not better than many of the Flash Gordon greats in the US. The Australian seven-issue (plus one special) series is difficult to find.



The popularity of the **X-Files, ET, & Close Encounters** have made the sci fi title **Silver Flash** (#54 at left) from the early 1950s very collectible in Australia.



Syd Nicholls wrote, drew and published the lavish-format pirate series **The Further Adventures of Middy Malone** in the 1940s, a run avidly sought after by Australian collectors.

The original **Captain Atom** (#13 above) actually began in the mid-1940s and is one of the few homegrown Australian superheroes. Drawn by Arthur Mather, the title outsold the Superman reprints.

Blue Star All Australian Comics proudly waved the Aussie flag in the style of the **All-Star** logo.

Adventures of Devil Doone (#31 at left) featured comic strips collected from men's magazines.

BLUE CIRCLE
COMICS
F.D.C.
NO. 6
APRIL
10¢
263942
The BLUE CIRCLE ZOOMS FOR THE KILLER !!!

Rants Raves & Revelations

BY RICK ROE

I tried to Email you folks a while back, but my MacSlip has a strange propensity for disconnecting itself before I choose. It was more or less a rambling wreck of a letter anyway. And a good thing, too, because I went through parts of my (tiny) collection one morning a few short weeks ago and in sorting through a box of old coverless, covers and fragments came across a cover I've had for many moons 'n' suns. The source of this artifact is unknown, but I have an idea whence it came, so I'll be looking into the rest of the book's content elsewhere in time.

Now, as you can tell (since I was the lucky winner of your Bela Kimelfeld contest), I have an abiding interest in comics esoterica. The era that I enjoy most is 1943-1955 (and as much as I love my pal Les Daniels, I must insist upon calling this period twingst Gold and Silver the DARK AGE of comics). Adults were a large part of comics' readership post WWII—after observing first hand the mayhem of war, they weren't likely to return as big fans of Superman when there was *Crime Does Not Pay* to be had! This engendered a couple of dozen splinter genres/trends exploited by nearly 100 publishers. Pretty clear why Victor Fox came back to do what he did! Hoo-Haa!!

Nice digression. Anyway, as founding father of esoteric research, I "fell down on the job." You'll find enclosed a color repro of the front (and inside front) cover of a book not only absent from the *Gerber Photo-Journal*, but from the *Overstreet* listing as well. Wow… an undiscovered newsstand comic from 1945! I've had this for a couple of years and never realized that this was the case. Got room for another piece of "Unseen Gold"?

As the owner of a near-complete set of *CBM* (#54 never made it to RI stores) and a veteran of fandom (since 1962), I must admit to a certain dismay I have about the lack of publisher information concerning what to me are two most fascinating aspects of this hobby. Seems to me you should be the outlet for this—ain't nobody else doin' this stuff (publishing Golden Age and Silver Age info and material). I want to know about people's collections and the background inherent. What was in the Rick Durell collection? How did Biljo White amass the White House books? What doesn't Michelle Nolan have? This is what we do in New England at shops and conventions—we share our goodies and discoveries.

I'm not interested in the investors who buy only high-grade books because they are "cool" and "rare" in "grade." I had enough of such latecomer, know-nothings in the '70s. I want to know about people who collect for love and fun and history. Don't care whether it's westerns, humor, crime, superheroes, or ducks… my curiosity is in the human element. I hope you encourage reader letters/articles on this idea.

As a for instance, as of last year I obtained a complete listing of Raymond Miller's comics from Ray himself… nearly 1,800 of 'em! What a range of interests, given what all he got rid of in the '50s and '60s. It's no wonder he was our "answer man" in the '60s! (Afraid I'm way overdue in writing to you, sorry Ray!) It is one thing to collect—quite another to interact with fandom.

The other aspect needful of discussion or at least a mention somewhere in *CBM* is the existence and ongoing effort of the research projects alive in fandom. *The Grand Comics Database*, *The Howard Keltner Index* and Bails' *Who's-Who* especially come to mind, as does the apa for indexers. I feel we need shared information to exist as a viable group! It couldn't hurt to get fandom interested in these concerns.

I'd love to see some of the guys from the Golden Age of fandom get interested enough to write at least once. I know we've lost Rick Durell and Don Thompson, but how about Bill Thailing, C. A. Hawk, Alan Levine, Bill Spicer, Glenn Bray and so many others? Where has fandom gone? Something tells me it costs too much to be a large-focus collector these days—I certainly have trouble with even small purchases. $100 used to buy me a large stack of cheesy, low-condition (or not) '40's and '50's books at shows in the '70s. Now, dealers (without a clue as to what's up) price *everything* as if they're brokering the Dead Sea scrolls. Ten people nationwide are really seeking some of this silly esoterica and all of us would rather pay a reasonable price than follow price guides that assign demand and escalate prices to items that should be far more within reason.

I suppose that if you can call Bails a liberal, you can readily call me a hippie. I tend to rail on against what I consider inequity. Let's face it, just because people will buy a 120 million Bugs Bunny stamps doesn't mean they're going to become collectors items! I'm suggesting that there really aren't that many people who are seriously interested in the history of comics… and that the number who actually collect Rural Home, Ace and Charlton comics is much smaller than any of us suspect. So why are the "Mile-High" collectors and other investors so influential in the rest of the market?

I know there are 20 billion or so '60's and '70's Marvels and DCs of every condition around—why should it cost so much to put a low grade collection

of *Metal Men, Doom Patrol,* or *X-Men* together for reading or enjoyment? Why aren't dealers doing any business at the big shows? Guys I know have some of the same books in stock today as in the late '70s when I was most active!

If a guide says a book is worth $40, is it? Sure, if you can get $40! 90% of guide prices are extrapolations... meaning very little. I know an elderly couple from Boston who have been perennial collectors of MLJ books—they wander the cons these days in deep shock, though they're hardly impecunious. This is not good. I feel that publicity and high prices paid have no effect on the general public (other than to bring greed to all collecting hobbies) and serve only to move pieces from old collections lovingly assembled into a very few private stashes amassed only because of perceived "rarity" and "value."

You know, I once bought and sold a collection of 1800+ MT '40's and '50's comics. Incredible stuff in superb condition, easily stored better than some of the Mile Highs. We didn't immediately leap beyond guide pricing, claiming "pedigrees" or other nonsensical accolades for the books. We sold 'em to collectors at Newcon '76 and *TBG* customers at prices agreeably reasonable to seller and buyer. Mitch Mehdy and his record-setting purchase of *Action* #1 for $1,801 was not typical of collectors—he was the first "investor" and nowhere to be seen since. He did manage to change the face of collecting popular culture, however.

Man—this has turned into a real rant! Sorry. You see, Gary, given what I know of you from your editorials and the basic stance of *CBM*, it is clear you have the best of intentions fannishly. You may be a bit awestricken, by the tone of your fervent recollected exploits, but the "tru-fan" is clearly evident. The essence of the collecting "drive" was nostalgia or fascination, not "value." This always set the collector apart from the opportunist dilettante. (Forgive my French—my wife taught it but I never learned it.)

As an inveterate idealist, this reaction of mine is clearly from the heart and not necessarily the result of deep thought, but my conclusions are fairly accurate anyway. I honestly believe that collecting comic books is best left to the experts. It is not a hobby that needed great growth. Even the efforts of the reprinters of ancient material never did that well by it, indicating the veracity of my viewpoint. There simply aren't that many real scholars to be found to buy old comics. Of the two or three hundred attendees at Boston shows, only a small handful know or care about comics history, and it's the same people who were there 20 years ago! The rest are simply investing. Certainly there are those who possess the wherewithal to purchase expensive books, but they'll settle for lesser condition for any real rarity or delight.

Is it me or do I always get into the same old territory?

On another slant, I saw Ron Goulart for the first time in many years just last weekend at a marvelous Sunday Hartford show (naught but comics for sale!) and I encouraged him to continue writing about comics history for those of us too young to have been there. The old guard is still cookin'! And pulp magazines seem to be making a comeback at the shows, too. The whole of twentieth-century pop culture is so fascinating that I hope we'll see a spin-off of our comics interest take hold and seek to preserve the connections between all these popular arts in the next few years. I am afraid the coming of the next century may have a dulling effect upon public interest in all this, as the generations that grew up with the 20th century fade and pass. Preservation of our common culture is as important to me as is the development of new art forms, of which I am a hearty enthusiast.

Well, I am not the best or fastest typist about, so as my muscle control and carpal nerves have begun to degenerate again, I will close this mad raving to allow you some time to digest and recover from my fervency. I know you have better things to do with your time! Ha! At any rate, please enjoy *Blue Circle Comics* #6. I was fascinated to discover that Howard Keltner has it on his list of books not yet indexed, so a separate copy of the covers are in transit to him as this goes to you. Let's get behind his effort to conclude his task—last I knew, he had only about 44 books left to index from the entire Golden Age!!! Perhaps you could publish his list, eh?

Thanks for your continued astonishing effort—it is such a beautiful magazine you publish, and so heartfelt. Fandom needs and deserves folks like you two. I'll never give up my bound volumes—they represent a lifetime of interest and deep love of the comics medium and I thank you for showing this to me.

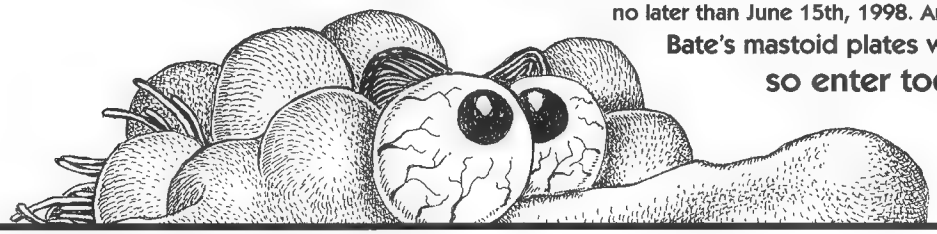
PAGE 44: Blue Circle Comics #6 (April 1945) is one of the few remaining "undiscovered" superhero books from the Golden Age. BCC #6 (from Rural Home Publishing) is not pictured in the Gerber Photo Journal nor documented in Overstreet. The indicia states that the issue is actually Vol. II, No. 3.

CBM's "Win Bates Gates" Contest

That's right collectors, you can win the (yagottabekiddin!) original Wolverton art (11½ " x 14½") of the most handsome and debonair gent in the whole doggone universe... Bates Gates!!! (See page 56 in this issue.) Just send your name, address, phone number, and "why I like CBM" (in 25 words or less) to: CBM's "Win Bates Gates" Contest, P.O. Box 180700, Coronado, CA 92178-0700. Entry's must be postmarked no later than June 15th, 1998. And remember,

Bate's mastoid plates won't wait...

so enter today!



Continued from page 36

sonally handed him a copy of Melchior's 'Space Family Robinson' to use as a guide for establishing costs for special effects."

Further, four of the first five episodes expand on scenes from the unaired pilot with footage from same. The first five episodes are: "The Reluctant Stowaway" (1st episode), "The" "Derelict" (2nd episode), "Island in the Sky" (3rd episode), "There Were Giants in the Earth" (4th episode), "The Hungry Sea" (5th episode). Shifres surmises the parallel is evidence of Melchior's treatment as a basis for Allen's "LIS" pilot.

"It is interesting to note that in the unaired pilot (this was the original pilot which sold the series), these four out of five episodes were essentially one complete story. The second episode of the series, "The Derelict," was barely used in the unaired pilot, nor can it be found in the comparison breakdown between the Allen and Melchior versions. This means that Allen's original unaired pilot was almost a carbon copy of Mr. Melchior's screenplay. Melchior's comparison list describes exact similarities to Allen's 'LIS' episodes 1, 3, 4 and 5—precisely like the unaired pilot, which like Melchior's screenplay, made no mention of "The Derelict" story."

The comparison list Shifres refers to consists of forty-two similarities he found in comparing the Allen and Melchior properties (both stories have a setting of 1997, for example).

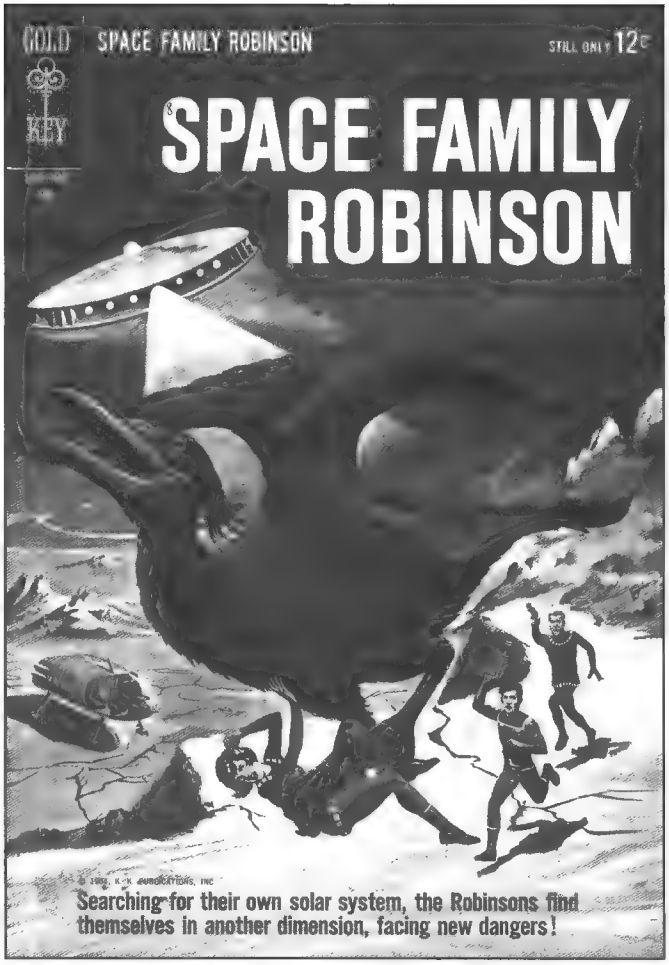
However, some major changes also occurred between the unaired pilot and the aired pilot, changes which give "LIS" a quality unique from Melchior's creation.

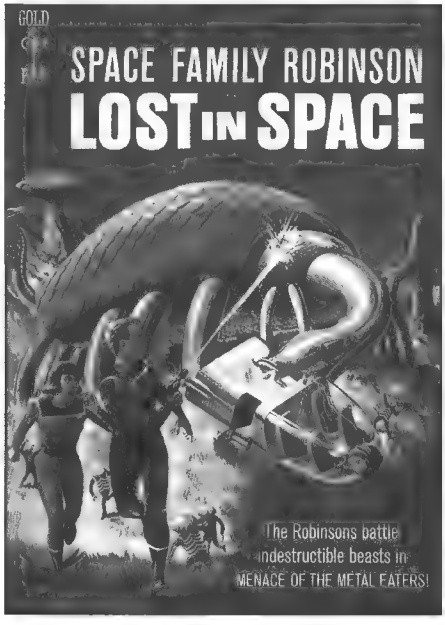
"Stowaway" introduced one of the all-time great antagonists of the small screen, Zachary Smith (played by Jonathan Harris). As a villain, Harris played Smith perfectly as a highly intelligent antagonist whose greed overshadows his goal, whatever that may be at the time. In any event, Smith serves his own ends, providing more conflict for the Robinsons and Don West (as if they don't have enough problems battling alien cultures and environments).

Villains like Smith date back to Shakespeare and beyond. Familiar to be sure, but Harris played the role with an originality that contrasted nicely with the squeaky clean Robinson crew and West. Clearly, he became the show's breakout character.

Another addition under Allen's aegis: a robot who provided the machine vs. man theme and made millions of chil-

(Continued on page 50)


GOLD KEY
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
STILL ONLY 12¢
SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON
Searching for their own solar system, the Robinsons find themselves in another dimension, facing new dangers!



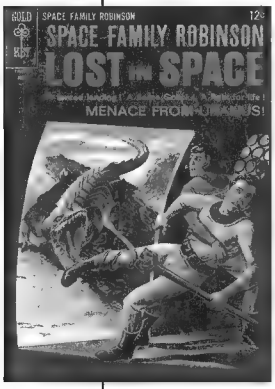
Giant birds (#8, Jun 1964), bats (#17, Jul 1966), and metal-eaters (#15, Jan 1966) were just part of the Space Family Robinson cover menagerie.

SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON © WESTERN PUBLISHING

Tony Starks on...

Lost In Space

MOST OF US HAVE AN AFFECTION for the Lost In Space television show. Yet many have overlooked the show's relationship to one of Gold Key's most commercially successful Hero/Adventure titles which actually preceded the TV show. That title was Space Family Robinson! While Valiant's revival of Dr. Solar and Magnus, Robot Fighter brought renewed collector interest (and increased prices) to those titles, the original Space Family Robinson/Lost In Space still remains relatively undiscovered... and undervalued. Here's a quick checklist of issues with important and/or interesting contents:



• **Issue #1** (Dec 1962) - Robinsons Craig and June, their two teenage children, Tim and Tam, and the family's pet dog and parrot, Clancy and Yakker are introduced. The Robinsons are the first family to live in space aboard a scientific research vessel (Space Station One). In this premiere issue, the Robinsons are actually not lost in space.

Published three months before *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, this might be valued at four figures had it been done by Marvel or DC.

• **Issue #2** (Mar 1963) - The Robinsons do become lost, when "a violent cosmic explosion rocks their experimental home." The explosion propels the space station deep into uncharted space.

• **Issue #3** (Jun 1963) - The Robinsons make radio contact with Earth and a rescue effort is mounted.

• **Issue #4** (Sep 1963) features yet another cosmic explosion that rocks the space station. They are now hopelessly lost... in space.

• **Issue #6** (Feb 1964) premieres the popular five page Captain Venture back-up stories. The series, which appears regularly through issue #36, details the adventures of Captain Rex Venture and his engineer Scotty Mackay (yes, Scotty) on a water covered world. The Captain Venture strip is often overlooked by collectors and is as good as back-up features go.

• **Issue #7** (Apr 1964) contains a great story in which Tim and Tam rescue their parents after Craig and June have been turned into living statues. Issue #7 also identifies the artist (Dan Spiegle) for the first time. Dan handled the illustration chores for the series through its entire run.

• **Issue #10** (Oct 1964) beautifully illustrates the allure of early Gold Key hero/adventure comics. In the "Captive Planet," Craig slips into a coma as a result of a head injury, and Tim and Tam head for the nearest civilized planet for medical help. When they arrive, they find the inhabitants of the planet hypnotized and in virtual slavery, mining and processing the ore (substance K) that has kept the planet's rulers alive for the past 200 years. Fighting off the hypnotic trance, Tim destroys the energy source, and the planet's rulers quickly die of old age. Dr. Adamo, who aided Tim, performs the delicate operation that saves Craig's life.

For only 12¢, the reader was treated to a wonderful 26-page lead story, a five-page Captain Venture story, no ads, and a back cover illustration. Now that's a great comic!

• **Issue #14** (Oct 1965) features a letter in LOC in which a reader suggests that Space Family Robinson would make a great TV show. Someone in the TV biz thought so too, because on September 15, 1965, the first episode of the TV series *Lost In Space* was aired. The similarities between the TV series and the comic book are too obvious to dismiss lightly: Both chronicle the adventures of the Robinson family, who become lost in space. Add a robot, a military attaché and Dr. Smith and you have rounded out the TV cast.

• **Issue #15** (Jan 1966) The title of the comic book was changed to *Space Family Robinson Lost In Space*. The TV show never gave credit to the comic for the concept of characters. The Gold Key editors feelings about this were probably best expressed in the letter column in issue #27 (Apr 1968).

Asked by a reader if the idea for the TV program *Lost In Space* came from the comic book *Space Family Robinson*, they answered: "Well, our comic was published regularly for three years before the TV show went on the air... and the subtitle of our second episode was "Lost In Space."

• **Issue #18** (Oct 1966) features the first part of the first continued story. The Robinsons find an abandoned space ship that has been on a specimen collection mission—to 12th century Earth! One of the Englishmen Sir Thomas

Maldane is an ancestor of June's. Sir Thomas and the rest of the English captives are revived from suspended animation, along with the ship's captain, Commander Kol. Initially, Commander Kol plans to take them all back as specimens, but after June nurses him back to health from a near fatal illness, peace is made.

• **Issue #19** (Dec 1966) The story continues as Commander Kol gives the Robinsons the famous Space-Time Phase Drive Machine. This machine enables the user to transverse great distances outside "normal" space and is prominently featured in many stories set in the future. Placing the Phase Drive machine aboard a spacemobile, Craig, Tim and Sir Thomas return to earth, but the year is 1181 AD, only four years after Sir Thomas' abduction. Sir Thomas eventually stays behind on Earth, while Craig and Tim make their way back to the station. But when activated aboard the Space Station, the unpredictable Phase Drive malfunctions once again, and they find themselves truly Lost In Space!

• **Issue #21** (Apr 1967) features the conclusion of the Sir Thomas story. In it, the remaining 12th century Englishmen and women decide to stay and make a new life on a primitive but beautiful planet. An interesting goof occurs this issue… the cover portrays Sir Thomas (who actually returned to Earth in issue #20), fighting alongside Tim.

• **Issue #23** (Aug 1967) contains the famous "Menace from Uranus" story that has had *Lost In Space* collectors snickering for years. It is still amazing how many collectors seek out this issue because of the humorous (humorous?) double entendre of the title. The issue also provides a good lesson for editors and writers… say those titles and dialogue out loud before you go to press or your product just may go into the comic book hall of fame… and/or shame!

• **Issue #29** (Aug 1968) features the first part of an excellent three part story that finished strong with lots of "shoot 'em up" action in issue #31 (Dec. 1968). This issue also marks the price increases to 15 cents, a full year earlier than Marvel or DC comics.

• **Issue #32** (Feb 1969) provides the Robinsons with a thought projection device that allows the user to send a solid image of themselves anywhere they imagine. This device is put to good use in many subsequent adventures.

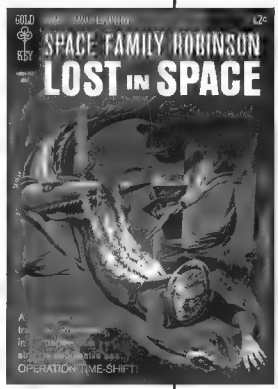
• **Issue #36** (Aug 1969, last Silver Age) was the last issue before a four year hiatus, with no hint given that the title was being canceled. Curiously, the published circulation figures indicated *Space Family Robinson* was a solid seller for Gold Key.

• **Issue #37** (Oct 1973, first Bronze Age issue) resumes the Robinson's adventures in space. A five-page Bronze Age "origin" brings readers up to date, followed by a nifty 20-page story entitled "The Seven Mechanical Men."

• **Issue #44** (Aug 1975) is the first to give credit to the writer Gaylord DuBois and the story "Lost In Time" is an absolute gem!

• **Issue #51** (Apr 1977) features a poignant tale of an arrogant race (the Masters) getting their comeuppance when they try to enslave a race mightier than their own. When the war is over, only one Master ship remains and when it crashes, the surviving slaves are free to start a new life.

• **Issue #53** (Oct 1977) has the story "No Place Like Home." It blends a *Wizard of Oz* type setting with a huge, menacing brain that uses mind control to try to take control of the space station. The Robinsons successfully resist and ultimately destroy the brain, which frees the populace that had been kept working in slavery.



• **Issue #54** (Dec 1977, final Bronze Age issue) the last with a new story.

• **Issue #55-59** (early 1980s) contain reprints of earlier adventures and line drawn covers.

So there you have it, 59 issues over a 20 year period! Despite their age, quantity, and the excellent quality of the stories and art, the *Space Family Robinson* run remains a very affordable set. Beautiful books to own, they should also be great investments, especially if the movie is a hit. Several of the issues are really standouts, with special focus on #1 (scarce issue), #2 (uses "Lost In Space" as story title), and all early issues with beautiful, outrageous, and colorful painted covers.

STARKS STATS: SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON

The Crew: The Robinson family, Craig 41, June 39, Tim 10, and Tam 15 were selected by computer as the ideal first family in space. They left earth aboard Space Station One on March 17, 2001.

The Ship: "Space Station One" is a scientific research and observation platform designed to be self sufficient during long term deep space missions. The sun deck supplies fresh fruit and vegetables, oxygen and water are recycled. Fuel is no problem, a magnetic drive is used that allows the station to take off and land slowly, yet still attain faster than light speeds. The station is 224 feet wide, its towers are 158 feet tall, and the main section between the towers is 40 feet thick. The station is not armed, hand held lasers and stunners are the Robinson's only weapons.

The Spacemobiles: Constructed of harder than steel plastic, the two spacemobiles measure 7 feet wide, 25 feet long, weigh only 1,300 lbs and seat four people comfortably. Operating on rockets, they are not as fast as the space station. Their chief use is for visiting planets within a solar system.

Thanks to Mike Seibert for help with research. Originally published in Overstreet's Comic Book Monthly #12 (April 1994).

Continued from page 47

dren envious for this futuristic computerized pet.

Lost in Space lasted three years and eighty-three episodes.

Allen's *Lost in Space* pilot for CBS was entitled "No Place To Hide." Although this pilot never aired during the show's original run (it did ultimately air on the Sci-Fi Channel), the Museum of Television & Radio which has locations in New York and Beverly Hills fortunately has a copy in its archives available for screening.

As in the aired pilot, "The Reluctant Stowaway," "No Place To Hide" shows the Robinson family (and Don West) launching into space on October 16, 1997 with the mission to explore an outer world for habitability as Earth suffers from over-population.

However, "No Place To Hide" provides more detail on the background of the crew than "Stowaway." These are interesting data for historical purposes but don't really affect the storyline.

Dr. John Robinson (played by Guy Williams) is a Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Stellar Dynamics.

Dr. Maureen Robinson (played by June Lockhart) is a biochemist at the New Mexico College of Space Medicine and the first female astronaut in the International Space Administration.

Will Robinson (played by Billy Mumy), age 9, is a graduate of the Camdo [sic] Canyon School of Science, with the highest average in school history.

Judy Robinson (played by Marta Kristen), age 19, is a musical comedy actress. Penny Robinson (played by Angela Cartwright), age 11, has the hobby of zoology and a genius IQ of 147.

Dr. Don West (played by Mark Goddard) is a graduate student at the Center for Radio Astronomy where he discovered the plausibility of habitability on other planets.

Some minor changes reflect in "Stowaway": Don West is a Major in the United States Space Corps, the Robinsons' mission has a cost of $30 billion and the spaceship's name is changed from Gemini 12 to Jupiter 2.

Dr. Smith's 'Lost World'

Jonathan Harris gave fans an interpretation on his character's appeal in Michael Starr's *New York Post* article "Dr. Smith's 'Lost' world: A marooned space family and a wisecracking robot" dated October 16, 1997. (The article coincided with the launch of a *Lost in Space* marathon on the Sci-Fi Channel, a programming inside joke to fans of the show—on *Lost in Space*, the Robinsons launched into space on October 16, 1997. Sci-Fi Channel began airing *Lost in Space* in 1992.)

"He was so many things—deceitful, sly, menacing, a coward, disreputable, charming and delicious. And kids loved me because "I got away with it." Nobody ever spanked me. He became the only anti-hero on TV who became a hero."

Harris used even more adjectives to describe his Smith character in a *TV Guide* article by Dwight Whitney dated June 18, 1966 entitled "One Case Where Evil Triumphs."

"I am deliciously wicked. I am selfish, self-pitying, pompous, pretentious, peremptory, conniving, unctuous, scornful, greedy, unscrupulous, cruel, cowardly, egotistical and absolutely delightful. The boy [Billy Mumy] loves me, but I would gladly sacrifice him to achieve my ends. I am the Baroque Villain whose mind is pure fantasy. 'He' is fantasy."

Relaunch, T minus 10 and counting...

Gary Oldman plays the Smith character in the *Lost in Space* movie which hits theaters this Spring courtesy New Line Cinema with a reported $70 million budget. New Line follows a movie making trend of the 1990s. Baby boomers who feasted on television during the 1960s are reviving their small screen favorites for the big screen, e.g., *Beverly Hillbillies, McHale's Navy, Batman, Mission: Impossible, Flintstones, Addams Family,* and *Fugitive.*

If *Lost in Space* proves successful at the box office, we can expect a re-entry to its home base of television; deals are signed for a live-action television series and animated children's show.

Marketers will undoubtedly utilize the cult following of "LIS" to promote merchandising tie-ins to the film, à la *Batman*. In the "Marketing & Media" section of *The Wall Street Journal* dated October 15, 1997, Kyle Pope explores the merchandising venue in his article "Lost in Space" Merchandising Blitz Targets Boomers and Sci-Fi Buffs."

Pope quotes Chris Russo, executive vice president at New Line. "The property is basically 32 years old and is probably one of the most undermarketed, underlicensed properties out there. We know that there's a group of people out there who really have a passion for this series and this brand."

Pope addresses the show's relative absence from the revival landscape and the market forces behind regenerating entertainment product.

"Debuting on CBS more than three decades ago, *Lost in Space* has been in a black hole recently. It missed the revival of kitsch that has swept the marketing and entertainment businesses. The movement, fueled by sentimental Baby Boomers and copycat twentysomethings, has brought back everything from cigars and martinis to revivals of *The Brady Bunch* and *Mission: Impossible*."

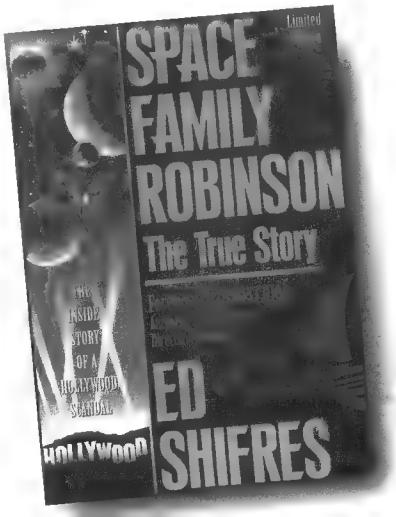
If the trend of reviving entertainment properties continues chronologically, then the creative decision makers of the first decade of the 21st century will likely be the children of the 1970s. And if *LIS* connects with audiences, sci-fi will likely be the genre of choice.

LOST IN SPACE © 1998 IRWIN ALLEN

Zorro & *Lassie* in Space

When Irwin Allen and CBS cast *Lost in Space*, they relied on some well-known and not-so-well-known television actors of the day. Top row, left to right they are: Angela Cartwright (Penny Robinson, from the Danny Thomas classic *Make Room For Daddy*), Mark Goddard (Major Don West), Marta Kristen (Judy Robinson), the Robot (acted by Bob May, voice by Dick Tufeld), Jonathon Harris (Dr. Zackery Smith, co-star of Michael Rennie on *The 3rd Man*), and Guy Williams from Disney's *Zorro*. Bottom row: June Lockhart (Maureen Robinson, from the second incarnation of CBS' *Lassie)* and Billy Mumy (Will Robinson, from a string of cameo appearances on many shows, most notably *The Twilight Zone,* who had already started buying Golden Age comics from Bert Blum at the Cherokee Book Store in Hollywood).

In the popular culture universe, everything old is new again. *Battlestar Galactica, Mork & Mindy* and *Buck Rogers* in the 25th Century may soon be coming to a theatre near you. *Lost in Space* fans constitute a pretty loyal bunch, so any encroachment on its niche in the sci-fi world may have them uttering a familiar warning: "Danger, Will Robinson!"



Lost in Space premiered on CBS on September 15, 1965 with a stirring theme by John Williams, later of *Star Wars* fame.

David Krell is an associate producer for the Fox News Channel and a freelance writer. David and CBM would like to thank Ed Shifres for his invaluable help with this article. Mr. Shifres is releasing a new, updated version of his Space Family Robinson: The True Story this Spring under the title Lost in Space: The True Story. The new 70 million dollar film, Lost In Space, is scheduled for theatrical release in April, 1998.

Reading American An Australian

BY DR. TONY DIDIO

I love a sunburnt country
A land of sweeping plains
Of rugged mountain ranges
Of drought & flooding rains

–Dorothea Mackellar

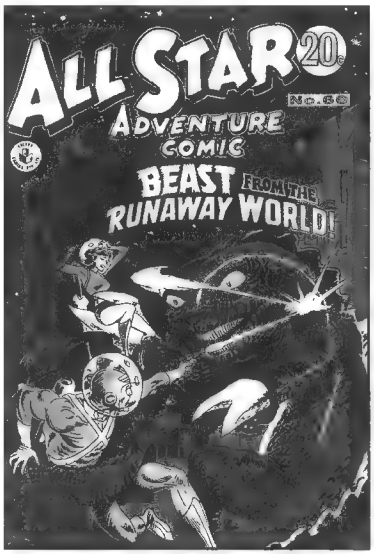
(published sometime before Famous Funnies #1)

The comic book is regarded as a uniquely American form of mass market entertainment, and perhaps rightly so. While illustrated fiction, hamburgers and movies can all make claims to origins remote from the fifty states, the enthusiasm and talent brought to bear by Americans on these media make them the deserved hosts for Captain America, pineapple hotdogs and *Weekend At Bernies II.*

But even Dorothea Mackellar's beautiful poem-anthem, memorized by us all in primary school, came in illustrated form, and Australians have joyfully devoured comic books for just as long as our American friends. Hugely popular local cartoonists like Sols, Banks, Kemsley and Leunig still share strip-space with Foster, Shultz, Groening and Larson in our dailies, and a growing comic book industry is constantly invading the US publishers' space on comic shop racks.

Shattering Suspense
Can your favorite super heros be destroyed as they fight evil?–Find out in every issue of
ALL FAVOURITES COMIC
ON SALE EVERYWHERE
20

Comics: View



Australian comic All Star Adventure #60 was printed by Kenmure Press Pty Ltd, CNR Derby and Wetherill Streets, Nth Lidcombe, New South Wales...and distributed in Melbourne by Gordon & Gotch (A/sia) Ltd and in Sydney by Colour Comics Pty Ltd.

THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE ATOM AGE

American comics trickled onto our shores in the mid 1930s and found willing readers, although we did not enjoy the boon young Liverpool boys had as millions of coverless copies of Golden treasures journeyed to the English west coast as ship's ballast. Among the arrivals were the first Marvel, Superman and Batman books, and a variety of newspaper reprint books such as *Ace* and *King*.

In 1940 the trickle dried up as the government enacted what was to become a 19-year ban on the importation of American comics and several other types of fiction—this from the same prime minister who spent most of 1939 selling our scrap iron (and cheap!) to the Japanese! It may have been a response to local cartoonist's concerns about the wholesale "dumping" of imported product onto our small local market (a scenario being re-enacted in 1997 by our local rock music industry), or wartime paper shortages, or who knows what, but the result was far from negative. More comics eventually arrived as part of the migration boom in the post-war years, as our population was augmented by tens of thousands of Europeans, whose suitcases sometimes held their children's 10¢ treasures as well as their dreams of life in a new land.

The children of this new world would read newspaper strips like *Prince Valiant* and *Flash Gordon* along with the local ones, and in 1956 marvelled at the first television transmission. Mostly those kids bought reprints of Disney books and upward of 1,300 beautifully printed issues of the Ducks and Mice appeared between 1946 and 1978. It was in the late 1940s that our most popular and enduring American comic was first published here by Frew. Lee Falk's Phantom and Mandrake are still icons in this country, and we all looked forward to issue #1,200 which appeared on our newsstands in 1997 (it's the only comic that actually does have nationwide newsstand space, the others all relegated to the ghettoes of our excellent but few speciality comics retailers.) Only the Swedes have come close to Australia in their embracing of the Ghost Who Walks, and even we cannot explain why the Phantom has been such a big part of our childhoods for fifty years. I can personally thank my knowledge of esoteric jungle nomenclature and Skull Cave topography for making at least one of my college initiation ceremonies a whole lot easier.

At some time in the early 1950s a large number of DC comics were reprinted on a regular basis by keen newsagent/publisher groups who continued to do this for several decades. As a result, very few of the original DC books were subscribed to by individual col-

lectors. The local reprints were a glorious mishmash of titles, the only ones being able to maintain a beautiful continuity were, unsurprisingly, Superman and his Bat-buddy. They both enjoyed thirty year runs interrupted only the increasing availability in the 1980s of the imported "real thing."

The other peculiarly Australian thing about those early years was the proliferation of "panorama" comics, which were a standard 24 or 32 pages, but were much wider than their height, ideally suited for the reprinting of daily and Sunday strips. They were usually printed in black and white, with a colour cover and occasionally a colour centrefold. Often an annual or special issue consisted of three earlier issues sewn together with the cover blurb "biggest comic ever published" screaming an invitation that few kids of the time could have been expected to resist. Those books are now very scarce because their owners treated them as little more than...boat ballast! Copies of most Australian Golden Age books were re-read by a multitude of younger siblings, as well as the siblings of those with whom they were traded! To me this adds greatly to their pedigree.

The Comics Code imbroglio raised its head in Australia too, although none of us really knew what the fun was about, seeing more DC than EC. Nevertheless, a prominent local mental health expert wrote a widely distributed paper on their dangers, which was largely ignored by the general community. Dr. Wertham was liberally quoted in the pamphlet! No comic here caused any further censorship row until a TV ethics crusader tried to ban *Spawn* #5 for excessive violence, with equally negligible success.

The sweetest comics story of that time must come from the heatwave Summer of 1953. Since the 1940 ban on American imports, many of the 1938-40 comics were warehoused in the inner-city offices of K. S. Murray publishers, and when for some reason they were unable to produce enough reprints that Christmas, they filled the country's newsstands with old remainders... *Marvel Mystery* #1, *Captain America* #1 and several *Superman* issues are well recalled by the kids of the time as 64-page colour oddities! Sadly, very few of these treasures have been given up by many of the local hoarders yet... but it's a date and place well worth remembering should your Way-Back Machine not go all the way back to 1939! A few short years after that summer, *Showcase* #4 would lead to the need for a new metal to define the panelological times.

THE SILVER AGE

Whether it was a reprint of *Detective* #225 or *Showcase* #4, or even *Fantastic Four* #1, the dawn of a new era in American comics ushered in by those books saw a similar wave of popularity on this side of the Pacific. While their parents sat at home watching the wrestling or swam at our numerous beaches, the kids of the fifties had a Saturday routine. Mornings spent getting sunburnt playing cricket or bruised in football matches gave way to afternoons at "the pictures" where, for next to nothing, a kid and his mates could enjoy a chapter of a serial (Flash Gordon being the best), followed by a Western or space operas, then some Warner Bros. cartoons before the main feature... all the while rolling candy down the aisles and loving life without knowing it, as kids do. And after the show... home to read those lurid treasures.

It was in the pages of *The Hundred Comic* that a child could bask in 100 pages of US reprint material in black and white for the equivalent of a dime, the comic usually sporting a colour cover from DC, with a Superman or Flash lead story followed by a combination of DC, Marvel or other publisher. Some locals still collect these books today as the cheapest form of Golden Age reprint material, as these stories were often used as fillers at the end of the books.

The federal government eventually lifted its ban on American imports in 1959 and a stream of these books found their way to the newsagents, on a less than regular basis. Local dealers recall seeing *Green Lantern* #1, *JLA* #1, *Spider-Man* #2 and *FF* #3 as the first of those titles to reach our country. (Rural areas like mine didn't see regular DCs until the 1980s, though, and Marvel was never regular or comprehensive until the mid '70s.)

The kids read their American comics with a voracity that, for some like me, continues to this day. Some would scorn the colourful imports, seeing far more value in *Superman Supacomic*, which each month reprinted two stories from *Action*, one each from *Superman, Batman* and *Detective,* as well as a Superboy or Legion tale to round it off. The comic had a great run of 192 issues from 1952-1976 and is still missed. Other monthlies had DC names like *All-Star,* which reprinted last month's Superboy stories from *Superboy* and *Adventure*, as well as a Golden Age reprint and a couple of mysteries; *Mighty*, chronicling JLA and Superman spinoffs Jimmy and Lois; *Super Adventure* which often combined Marvel hero and horror with DC second bananas; and *World's Finest* and *Tiptop,* which featured mostly Batman and Wonder Woman interspersed with esoterica. *Super Giant* contained lots of pre-hero Marvel, and for some reason, almost every story from DC's *Big Town* and *Mr. DA*—certainly an odd marriage of genres! I know several collectors who still fill gaps in their American originals collections

with these black and white books and derive great pleasure from both (*Mighty* #74 will have to do until I get the US versions of *JLA* #82-3).

Gradually, the "real thing" became more popular as Marvel commenced its magnificent run of melodramas in 1961, building a cohesive "Universe" the likes of which we had never seen. With the advent of the 1959 freeing of borders, EC's *Pirate* (but not *MAD*, sadly), most Atlas, and numerous collected strips like Twin Earths, Ben Bolt and others joined the local product, although some obscure agreement between DC and the major news distributor still meant that most DCs were read in reprint form in this country until the 1970s.

THE BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND...

As with any hobby where the primary motivation and source of ongoing pleasure is unabashed nostalgia, the advent of easy access to a full range of American comics in the early 1970s, and the subsequent loss of the reprint books and the magic they gave, brought a little sadness. It became a situation where, instead of your wise big brother coming home from Ali Baba's cave every month with his personal selection of six cheap jewels, you got to go to the cave yourself—the marvels were wonderful to behold, but the mystery was diminished, and the books cost a lot more (even at a time when our dollar was worth one of yours, instead of the peso, against which it struggles valiantly today). It was a loss of comic book innocence in a way.

The first comic shop owners were true pioneers and many are still going strong. Several began as mail order specialists, dealing in Disney and Phantom, while others were brash young collectors with good business sense. There are almost as many dealers here claiming to be our first specialty retailer as you have hotels claiming that George Washington slept there. In those early days a 35¢ comic sold here for 40¢, but today's kids pay $4.50 for a US $2.50 book (and no, don't ask me where they get the cash, but I can bet that they won't get as much reading out of it as we got out of our hundred pages of Weisinger-isms—what did I say about nostalgia?)

One of the most positive aspects of the very healthy local industry is the plethora of talented young self-publishers we have now. Each year the "Ozcon" comics convention hosts a couple of big publishers, some US creators (Dave Sim has been gracious and popular twice now) and gives awards to creators that are exclusively for local self-publishers (no doubt making it easier for Mr. Sim to be gracious).

Australians have been delighted by comics since the scathing editorial cartoons of our 19th century newspapers and magazines, and local comic books have had a strong presence even still today, but to most of my fellow collectors the great joy has been the wonderful American books with their superheroes and their ducks. Whenever I daydream with my co-dweebs about what it must have been like for the American kids to have walked around the corner to the newsstands and pick up all the latest DCs with real dimes and use them to buy real sea monkeys and Charles Atlas books, I wonder if those kids would have enjoyed our hundred page anthologies of genius in days of 8-page continuity, so joyous to open after surfing or a day in the outfield playing cricket in "the sunburnt country."

AUSTRALIAN COMICS PRICE GUIDE

Continued from page 18

been available to fellow collectors and friends and this has obviously been a two-way process. His greatest annoyance was the individuals who insisted that he ring them long distance while they go through a pile of old comics and insist on a telephone valuation with no intention of ever selling them. The cost plus the waste of time drove Roger to write the book.

"Now, when such a person rings," grins Roger, "I sell them a book." [Within Australia, **Australian Comics 1924-1966: An Index and Price Guide** is $28 post paid. Outside Australia a copy costs $45 postage paid. (Note: Surface mail to the US and other countries can take up to three months, that's why all such orders are sent air mail.) The current exchange rate has the Aussie dollar floating around 70% of the US dollar so the overseas purchase is actually financially more attractive (translate: cheaper). For more information contact: Roger and Edda, c/o Comic Book Nostalgia, PO Box 640, Forster, NSW 2428, Australia.]

It needs to be said that Roger's academic background has had an influence with so many academics contacting him re access to this unique collection. Previously a high school teacher and a former university graduate in history, it seemed obvious that he would further his own qualifications and he is part way towards an honours degree that utilises this new information.

An initial look of horror, followed by laughter when we asked when he and Edda will do an index and price guide on all the Australian produced comics. This smaller index has been a big enough battle but he is considering it.

Roger is quick to give a big tribute to his partner, Edda. Her computer skills and patience has made this a good team effort. Initially, she is happy to admit that she knew nothing about comic books. She laughs when she says, "But I'm learning and learning fast."

Returning to the possibility of an expanded or extra volume on the American and British reprints, Roger admits that there is a growing interest in such a project.

"Every serious **Phantom** collector is well aware that Australia leads the world in comic reprints," he remarks, "So much so that Nigel Johnson, my friend in Queensland, has released a worldwide price guide on the **Phantom** comics in English plus the assorted games, rings and other assorted collectibles."

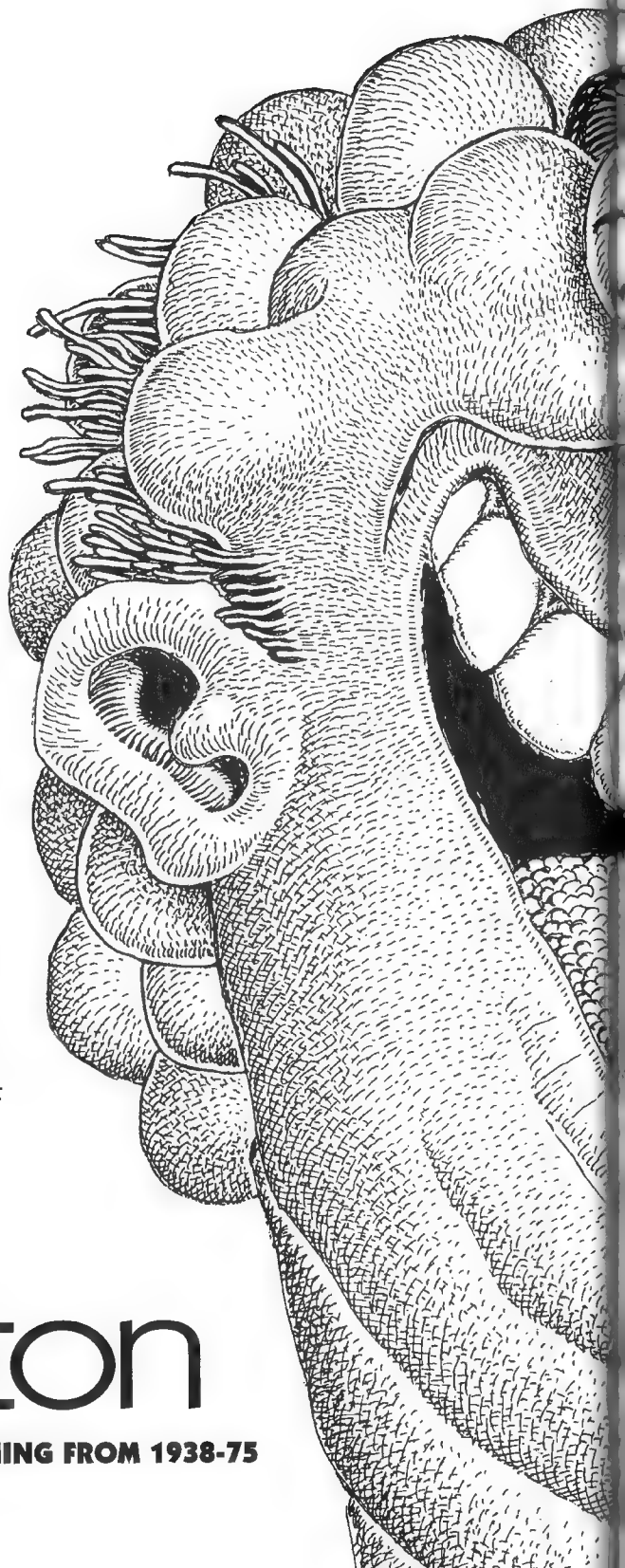
"For most people dealing in comics here (in Australia), **The Phantom** is their best seller. There is also a big interest in our Disney comics in the past and there are some titles keenly sought by collectors in England."

For Roger Morrison, comics have proven to be a very rewarding hobby. Like most of us, the nostalgia aspect was the initial beginning. Later, it became a second business to his gymnasium and, while the gym has gone, he still runs a successful mail order business in buying and selling old comics worldwide. Adding to his own collection along the way was an added bonus. Knowing the major collectors has added to his knowledge.

At the moment, his historical background has caused him to focus again on his hobby and he has been delighted at the new findings he is discovering. A new perspective that he keenly talks about.

There is another book lurking about...

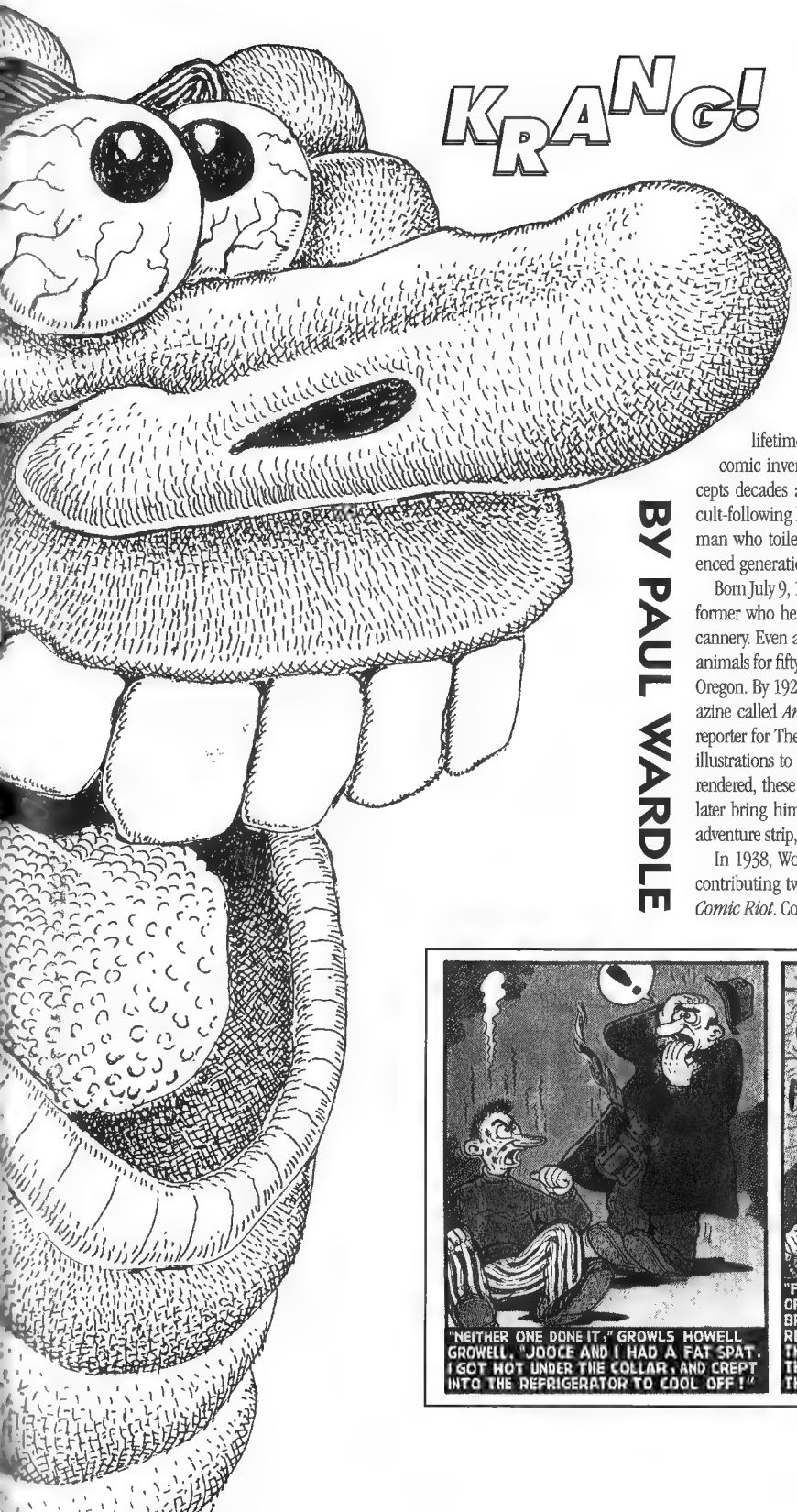
Bates Gates, who rates the most mastoid plates, states: "Pates like mine look lumpy and loathesome, but they're exciting to touch!"



THE COMEDY GENIUS OF

Basil Wolverton

AN OVERVIEW OF HIS HUMOR CARTOONING FROM 1938-75



KRANG!

The solution to Inspector Hector The Crime Detector's cartoon mystery (Joker Comics #17, Win 1944; BOTTOM) was never what readers expected.

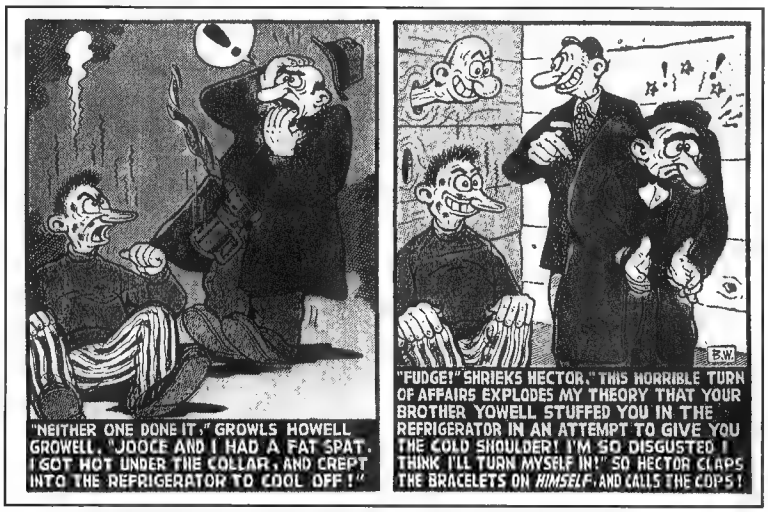
BY PAUL WARDLE

There were a handful of truly great cartoonists who graced the Golden Age of comics. Though opinions may differ as to who made the greatest contribution, who was the funniest or most inventive, one thing is certain. There was and always will be only one Basil Wolverton.

Largely ignored by most comic book fans in his lifetime, Wolverton has left the world a legacy rich with comic inventiveness and a timeless quality of bizarre concepts decades ahead of their time. In recent years, a devoted cult-following has built up around the work of this remarkable man who toiled in obscurity for most of his career, yet influenced generations of cartoonists to follow.

Born July 9, 1909, Basil Wolverton was a former vaudeville performer who held a variety of odd jobs, including working in a cannery. Even as a child, he was able to sell cartoon drawings of animals for fifty cents at a fairground near his home in Portland, Oregon. By 1926, he had sold his first humor cartoon to a magazine called *America's Humor* and became a staff artist and reporter for The Portland News. In the late 1920s he sold several illustrations to science-fiction pulp magazines. Though crudely rendered, these illustrations display all the elements that would later bring him success illustrating the popular science-fiction adventure strip, "Spacehawk" in the early 1940s.

In 1938, Wolverton entered the fledgling comic book field, contributing two strips for the first three issues of *Circus, The Comic Riot*. Cover dated June 1938, the first issue of *Circus* car-


"NEITHER ONE DONE IT," GROWLS HOWELL GROWELL. "JOOCE AND I HAD A FAT SPAT. I GOT HOT UNDER THE COLLAR, AND CREPT INTO THE REFRIGERATOR TO COOL OFF!"
"FUDGE!" SHRIEKS HECTOR. "THIS HORRIBLE TURN OF AFFAIRS EXPLODES MY THEORY THAT YOUR BROTHER YOWELL STUFFED YOU IN THE REFRIGERATOR IN AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE YOU THE COLD SHOULDER! I'M SO DISGUSTED I THINK I'LL TURN MYSELF IN!" SO HECTOR CLAPS THE BRACELETS ON *HIMSELF*, AND CALLS THE COPS!
B.W.

A CBM CHECKLIST

THE COMIC BOOK HUMOR WORK OF BASIL WOLVERTON

(Reprints and non-humor work are not included in this list.)

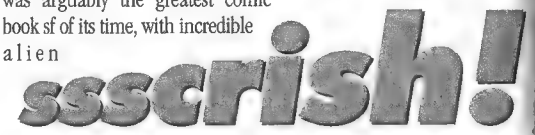
Grateful acknowledgement goes to Dick Voll, Gene Kehoe and Henry Steele whose previous indexes made this task a hell of a lot easier.

Black Diamond Western #16-28 (Lev Gleason)
Bingbang Buster And His Horse Hedy
Candy #1-3 (Lev Gleason)
Scoop Scuttle
Captain Battle Jr. #2 (Globe Syndicate)
Scoop Scuttle
Circus, The Comic Riot #1-3 (Globe Syn.)
Disk-Eyes The Detective
Comedy Comics #34 (Timely)
Dauntless Dawson
Comic Comics #2-10 (Fawcett)
Mystic Moot And His Magic Snoot
Comix Book #1, 2, 4 (Marvel/Kit. Sink)
Calvin, Weird Creatures
Cracked #10 (Major Magazines)
Crazy #1 (Marvel)
Crazy, Man, Crazy Vol. 2 #1, 2 (Charlton)
Daredevil Comics #12-20, 22 (Lev Gleason)
Scoop Scuttle
From Here To Insanity Vol. 3 #1 (Charlton)

Gay Comics #1, 18-29 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper, Flap Flipflop The Flying Flash, Inspector Hector The Crime Detector, Hash House Hank, Salesman Sid The High Pressure Kid, Bedtime Bunk, Hothead Hotel, Professor Jogg
Georgie #14 (Timely)
Dr. Whackyhack The Wacky Quack
GJDRKZLXCBWQ Comix (Underground)
Hedy Devine Comics #23 (Timely)
Picture Poems About Peculiar People
Horse Feathers Comics #1 (Lev Gleason)
Scoop Scuttle
Human Torch #8, 10 (Timely)
Picture Poems About Peculiar People, Funny Boners
Ibis The Invincible #3-5 (Fawcett)
Mystic Moot And His Magic Snoot
Joker Comics #1-27, 29-31 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper, Leanbean Green, Salesman Sid The High Pressure Kid, Funny Boners, Picture Poems About Peculiar People, Inspector Hector The Crime Detector
Kid Komics #1 (Timely)
Flap Flipflop The Flying Flash
Krazy Komics #1, 2 (Timely)
Piston Pete, Flap Flipflop The Flying Flash
MAD #10, 11, 17, 29, 31, 36, 40, 82, 127
Millie The Model #9 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper
Nellie The Nurse #9 (Timely)
Dr. Whackyhack
Oscar Comics #25 (2) (Timely)
Salesman Sid The High Pressure Kid
Plop #4, 22, 24 (DC)
(plus many covers on other issues)
Powerhouse Pepper #1-5 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper, Dr. Dimwit, Disk-Eyes, Foolish Faces, Goofy Giggles, Picture Poems About Peculiar People
Rusty #14 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper
Silver Streak Comics #20, 21 (Lev Gleason)
Scoop Scuttle
Sub-Mariner Comics #4, 9 (Timely)
Dr. Dimwit
Target Comics Vol. 4 #6 (Novelty Press)
Targetoons
Tessie The Typist #1, 2, 4-14 (Timely)
Powerhouse Pepper, Doc Rockblock, Picture Poems About Peculiar People, Inspector Hector The Crime Detector, Bedtime Bunk, Dr. Whackyhack
U.S.A. Comics #7 (Timely)
Disk-Eyes The Detective
Weird Tales Of The Future #2-5 (S.P.M./Aragon)
Jumpin' Jupiter
Whiz Comics #65-68, 70-85, 87-96, 98-100, 102-110, 112-121, 123, 126, 128-130, 133, 134, 142, 143, 146
Culture Corner

ries the earliest humurous comic book story by Wolverton, "Disk-Eyes, the Detective." It was ascribed to the pseudonym Dennis Langdon because the editor didn't want to have two features in the comic signed by the same artist. "Disk-Eyes" is remarkably sound cartooning, though slightly more primitive than Wolverton's best-known strips. Again, this early work contains many of the elements that he would use to greater advantage as he gained more experience as a comic book artist.

For the next few years, Wolverton achieved early success creating science-fiction and super-hero work for Centaur (Space Patrol, Meteor Martin), Timely (Rockman) and Globe Syndicate (Spacehawks). Spacehawks was the other two page strip in the first three issues of *Circus*, the one on which Wolverton signed his real name. This is not to be confused with the singular Spacehawk which appeared for two straight years in Novelty Press' *Target Comics*. The artwork in Spacehawk was arguably the greatest comic book sf of its time, with incredible alien



landscapes, lovingly delineated by Wolverton's meticulous fine linework. The alien creatures he created as antagonists for the title character were a definite precursor to the grotesque creations Wolverton would become famous for in later years. However, like the 95 pages of horror and science-fiction stories Wolverton would draw (and often script) in the early 1950s, this serious art would take far more space than this magazine would allow to dissect properly, therefore forgive me for ignoring Wolverton's sf and horror work for the remainder of this article to concentrate on a detailed analysis of his humor strips only. However, before we leave this subject, I hasten to add that all Wolverton's Golden Age comic book work is worth digging up, and thankfully most of the aforementioned stories from the 1950s are available in affordable reprints, as are several of his Spacehawk adventures.

It is a great boon for us that Wolverton was never able to get a syndicated newpaper strip published, which was his intention early on. Had he secured this position, he would no doubt have achieved more mainstream fame, but had less freedom, therefore never achieving the great comic book work for which he is now known. He did, however, come close to being syndicated on many occasions, but something always happened to quell the deal. One of these was Scoop Scuttle, an inept newspaper reporter. Denis Kitchen eventually published these tryout strips in the *Li'l Abner Vol. 12* collection, in an article about Wolverton. They were also rearranged and reprinted in Lev Gleason's *Silver Streak Comics*, and new installments appeared in *Daredevil Comics* in the early 1940s. By this time,

Newspaper reporter, Scoop Scuttle (Daredevil Comics #19, Oct 1943), gets "a bust in the bean."

Wolverton was reaching his peak as a cartoonist, and the Scoop Scuttle strips show all the quirky characteristics that Wolverton would employ in what was to become his most famous and durable humor character, Powerhouse Pepper.

Premiering in Timely's *Joker Comics* #1 (April 1942), Powerhouse Pepper was the world's first bald, striped-shirted super-hero. Never violent unless provoked, Powerhouse had a heart of gold, and like the comedy films of Buster Keaton or the cartoons of Bugs Bunny, always came out ahead at the end of each adventure, dispatching villains many times his size and usually being financially compensated for his efforts. The strip ran in almost all of the first 31 issues of *Joker* and soon began appearing in other Timely titles as well.

Except for an occasional installment of Harvey Kurtzman's HEY! LOOK!, most of the other cartoon strips in the Timely humor comics were terribly written juvenile crap, often with a large dose of slapstick violence, or teenage Archie rip-offs which existed only to show off drawings of pretty girls. Wolverton's work shines out like a beacon among these other forgettable and mainly unreadable comics. Yet because he lived in Portland, and rarely was able to visit Timely's New York offices, Basil Wolverton was paid less than the others, simply because he wasn't told that there had been a pay raise for contributors, and was reportedly owed $11,000 which he never recovered. Yet his work lives on while the others died in obscurity, validating the hardship he endured.

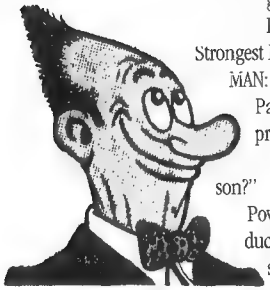
Besides the amazingly detailed artwork and bizarre characters devised by Wolverton in Powerhouse Pepper, he incorporated such bizarre elements as having all the characters speak in alliteration, rhyme or both. In addition, sight gags (also with the same verbal techniques) were everywhere, like signs that had to be read upside down (and sometimes backwards as well). There was fun and wonderment in every panel. Gigantic antagonists were often horrified when they couldn't hurt the little bald man and were usually beaten to a pulp without Powerhouse even working up a sweat. It makes me wonder what would've happened had Wolverton collaborated with Tex

TIME PASSES
WHAT A HAND! I PASS!
THERE'S SNEAK PEAK! WE'RE NEARLY THERE!
QUIET!
THIS IS IT, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY RIVER!
QUIT YOUR RIBBIN'!

Even as simple a caption as "time passes" (Gay Comics #1, Mar 1944) becomes a sight gag in Wolverton's hands.

dud-dud-dud-dud-dud!

NO! THAT'S KILLER DILLER, NOT KILLER MILLER! KILLER DILLER IS ONLY A HARMLESS KILLER DILLER! I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO SEE KILLER DILLER WHEN YOU WERE HERE! IF YOU CAN LOCATE KILLER MILLER, DEAD OR ALIVE, WE'LL PAY YOU A THOUSAND BUCKS!
3
WELL-UH-HEH! HEH! I GUESS YOU REALLY ARE THE KILLER, KILLER!
SHUT UP! I'M GONNA BUST YER BEAN FER INSULTIN' ME GOOD NAME!



Avery on animated cartoons. The results would surely have been memorable. A typical verbal exchange from *Joker* #18 will give you an idea of the level of lunacy that ensued.

Powerhouse is encouraged to go on the radio as "The Strongest Man In The World."

MAN: "It's called, 'Parker P. Picklepan's Preposterous Parade of Peculiar Persons!' I'm Parker P. Picklepan, producer!"

PP: "And you want to parade me as a peculiar person?"

Powerhouse was picked for the program after the producer had peered at Powerhouse stopping a crook from stealing a safe. When he saved a man from being hit by the falling safe, Powerhouse said, "Come back, fellow, before that falling strong box knocks the sox off your stocks!"

You get the idea. Whew!

Even Wolverton's signature would often be signed Basil Bugbrain Wolverton, Basil Weevilwit Wolverton, Basil Bullbeak Wolverton, etc.

Despite the obvious quality of these strips, editor Stan Lee must not have valued Wolverton's contributions much, for even when the strip's popularity facilitated giving it a book of its own, *Powerhouse Pepper* #1 (1943) had only 37 pages of the 53 pages of artwork allotted to Wolverton's strips, and even the cover (!) of this and two other issues of PP were drawn by inferior staff cartoonists, usually to show off good girl art.

HANG ON! WE'RE GOING TO LAND ON THE MOON SOON!
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'VE BEEN DOING FOR THE LAST THREE DAYS?
THIS PLANET SURE IS STREWN WITH STADIUMS, PROFESSOR! FOOTBALL MUST BE MIGHTY POPULAR HERE!
THOSE AREN'T STADIUMS! THEY'RE CRATERS!
BAM!
MOON PRUNE
TSK! TSK! THE SHOCK ON MY PATE HAS CRACKED MY PLATE! I'LL HAVE TO SEE A DENTIST RIGHT AWAY!
DOESN'T LOOK AS THOUGH YOU'LL FIND ONE AROUND HERE, BUT I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK!
CRASH
TOWEL

By 1944, Powerhouse Pepper was also appearing in Timely's *Gay Comics*. By 1946, another Wolverton character was also appearing in Timely's *Gay Comics*. Flap Flipflop, The Flying Flash had premiered in February 1943's *Kid Komics* #1. A little guy in a pint-sized plane, FLAP was pure Wolverton with all the same devices found in most of his strips of this period, though this character possessed no superstrength and was a good deal shorter than Powerhouse. He zoomed through many psychotic adventures in his short span of publication and was never used again, though he always won out at the end of each story.

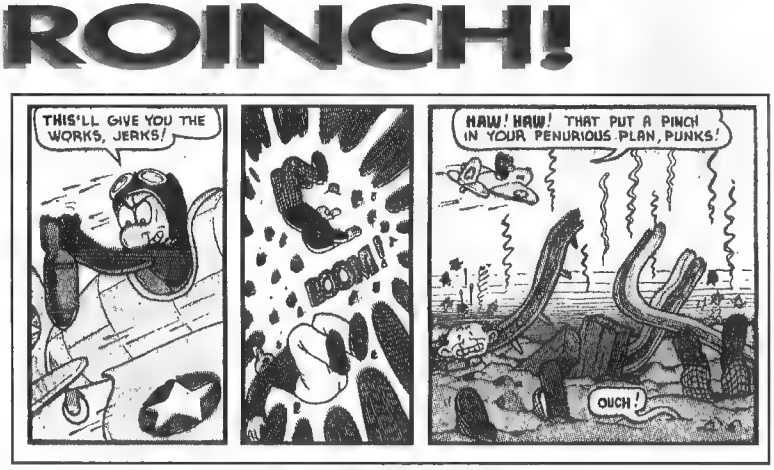
Other Wolverton features appearing in the Timely humor titles include Leanbean Green, Hothead Hotel, Hash House Hank, Doc Rockblock, Picture Poems About Peculiar People, Bedtime Bunk, Funny Boners, Foolish Faces, DR. Dimwit, Goofy Giggles, Dr. Whackyhack and Salesman Sid, The High-Pressure Kid. Many of these were one or two page strips and some, like Doc Rockblock or Bedtime Bunk used no dialogue at all, proving that Wolverton was equally adept at pantomime gags. Picture Poems and Foolish Faces were usually grotesque spot illustrations (the kind that would soon bring Wolverton his greatest fame) with funny captions.

An interesting diversion was Cartoon Crime Mystery, which featured Inspector Hector The Crime Detector. In this, the reader was shown a situation where a crime had taken place and was asked to try and solve it. This was of course impossible because in Wolverton's world, nothing is what is seems. Like most of Wolverton's comics, the plot was of minimal importance. Getting from one gag to the next is the fun part.

One exception was the plot of Dauntless Dawson, a strip that made its only appearance in *Comedy Comics* #34 (Fall 1946). Dawson was a runty chemist who decides he would rather apprehend criminals. But he is not prepared to face The Nose, a monstrous killer and robber, who bashes the hapless pharmacist on the head with an axe. When DAWSON comes to, he is so disgusted with himself that he vows to make a drug so that he can commit suicide. Instead the potion transforms him into a gigantic strongman who then goes out to get even with the The Nose. All the dialogue is spoken in rhyme, and when DAWSON finds the villain stealing a lady's purse, he makes short work of him. In gratitude, the pretty girl tells him, "Oh thank you, Sir! You saved my money! You're such a strong and handsome honey!" Full of hilarious dialogue and sight gags, it's a shame no one ever published a second installment of Dauntless Dawson.

By the 1940s, Wolverton was also working for Fawcett

HASH HOUSE HANK
by BASIL WOLVERTON
HEY, HANK! BRING ME A BIG BOWL OF STEW AND SOME CRACKERS!
OKAY! COMING UP AS SOON AS I BEDECK THIS BUTTER WITH BUG BAIT!
BOILED BERLAP BAG ONE BUCK
ONE GOB OF GOULASH TO GORGE, GEORGE!
OBOY! I DO LOVE TO SHOVE GOOD STEW INTO MY STOMACH!
TRY TREATING YOUR TRAP WITH A TRAY OF TRIPE!
SLUP!



Salesman Sid, The High-Pressure Kid (FACING PAGE); Hash House Hank; and Flap Flipflop The Flying Flash all from Gay Comics #23 (Apr 1946).

Wolverton worked his mastery of space landscapes into this Powerhouse Pepper Adventure in Joker Comics #26 (Feb 1947).

FEEMP!

In his only appearance (Comedy Comics #34, Fall 1946), Dauntless Dawson confronts "The Nose."

Bingbang Buster and his horse, Hedy, from Black Diamond Western #16 (Nov 1949).

Publications, doing half-page strips in the company's flagship title, *Whiz Comics*. The title of these pieces was Culture Corner Conducted By Croucher K. Conk, Q.O.C. (Queer Old Coot). One installment, "How To Cut Your Own Hair" was conducted by Crawler Q. Collar (Conk Clipper). Wolverton's best strip for Fawcett, however, was Mystic Moot And His Magic Snoot, an Eastern mystic who wiggled his enchanted proboscis to make miracles in *Comic Comics* #2-10 and as a backup feature in *Ibis The Invincible* #3-6. These strips were printed from 1945-48, concurrent with Timely work.

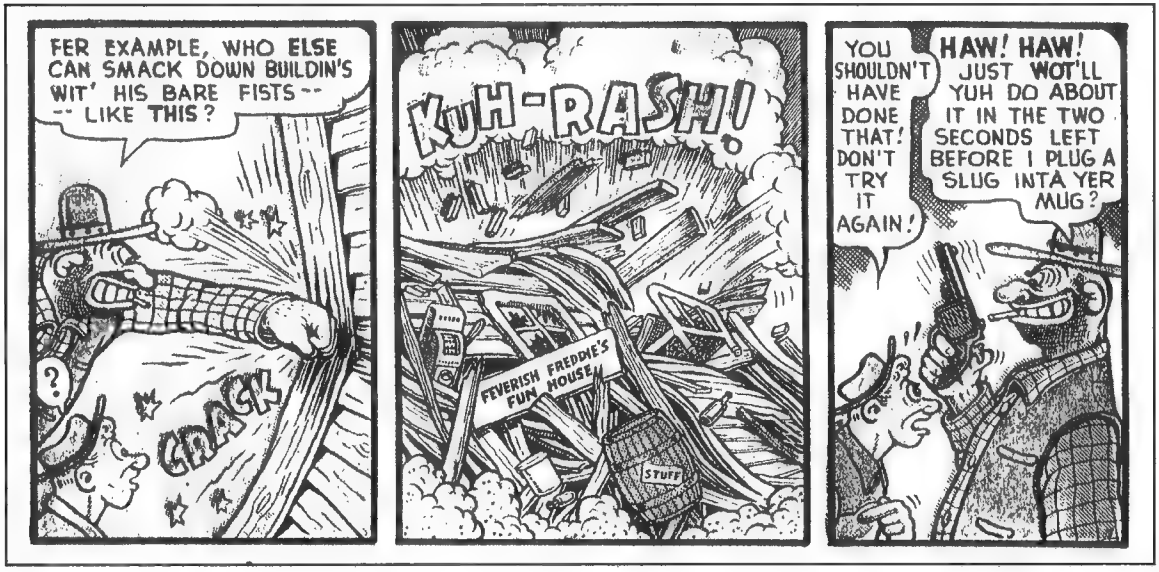
By 1948, Timely was buckling under to a slump in the comic book industry and relying on scantilly clad girls to sell comics.

JWORCH!!!

Wolverton's strips which had usually been 6-10 pages long, (and an 18-pager in the first issue of *Powerhouse Pepper*) were cut to four pages and then dropped altogether. Reportedly an unprecedented number of fans wrote in, demanding the return of Powerhouse, and, five years after the first issue, Timely published four more issues of Powerhouse Pepper, this time with only 20 pages by Wolverton out of 32. Luckily, Basil had gained higher paying work from other sources by this time.

I'll let Mr. Wolverton himself relate the story in his own words (from a 1971 interview by Dick Voll). "In 1946, United Features [Syndicate] launched a newspaper promotion plan in the form of a contest in which the readers of Li'l Abner were invited to submit drawings of Lower Slobbovia's ugliest woman, Lena The Hyena. The final choices were made by Salvador Dali, Boris Karloff and Frank Sinatra." After winning this national contest, Wolverton received high-paying assignments doing caricatures of famous people and was featured in several issues of *Life Magazine*. "At long last, I was able to afford an eraser for each hand and a real drawing board of my own. This was a happy event for my wife, who resented my working on her ironing board—especially when she was ironing," said the articulate Mr. Wolverton, who *Life* referred to as an "adherent of the spaghetti-and-meatballs school of design."

From 1950-52, while engaged in creating masterpieces of horror and science-fiction like the classic "Brain Bats Of Venus" for Marvel and other publishers, Wolverton also parodied the genre he loved so well with Jumpin' Jupiter, a bizarre strip about alien creatures that spoke Wolverton-style English on another planet. It ran in books like *Weird Tales Of The Future*, right alongside his seriously frightening sf work and made only a few short appearances. During this period, Wolverton returned to work for Lev Gleason Publications, doing a western parody that appeared as a three-page backup feature in *Black Diamond Western*. This was Bingbang Buster And His Horse Hedy. Wolverton had used western settings often in Powerhouse Pepper, but Bingbang, though not a superpowered character, had in Hedy, a combination sidekick and mode of transportation that made for a dynamic duo of sorts, quite able to best villainous owlhoots in issues #16-28 of *Black Diamond Western*, from November 1949–November 1951.


FER EXAMPLE, WHO ELSE CAN SMACK DOWN BUILDIN'S WIT' HIS BARE FISTS -- -- LIKE THIS?
CRACK
KUH-RASH!
FEVERISH FREDDIE'S FUN HOUSE
STUFF
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT! DON'T TRY IT AGAIN!
HAW! HAW! JUST WOT'LL YUH DO ABOUT IT IN THE TWO SECONDS LEFT BEFORE I PLUG A SLUG INTA YER MUG?

Paul "Wottawriter" Wardle wades into Powerhouse Pepper #3 on Wolverton Avenue.

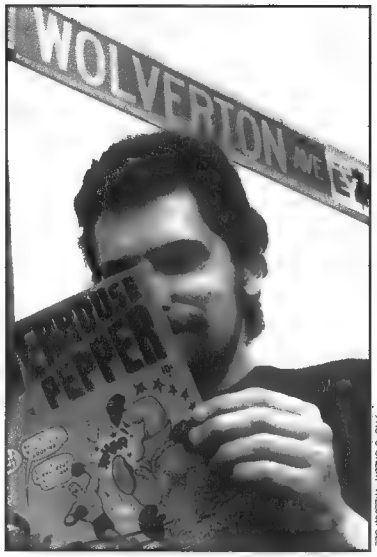


PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIAM GEE

Wolverton's gift for grotesque faces landed him assignments for Harvey Kurtzman's *MAD* comic book, including the classic *Life Magazine* parody cover on *MAD* #11. When the book became magazine sized and was taken over by Al Feldstein, Wolverton continued to appear, and also did a cover for Feldstein's *Panic* and other humor magazines of the day including *Cockeyed* and *Pageant*.

In 1958, Wolverton did several hundred illustrations for Ambassador Press, which would be published as *The Bible Story*. The truly frightening drawings illustrating the book of Revelations have been reprinted in several publications in recent years, but the entire set of books was still given away free by The Plain Truth to anyone who asked. Basil's son, Monte still works for the organization, and is the only person alive who can imitate his father's style perfectly.

After this, Wolverton's work was not seen in comic books until the early 1970s. By this time, underground comix artists like Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton showed strong Wolverton influence and a mini-comic of mainly unseen Wolverton art was released in 1973 under the title, *GJDRKZLX-CBWQ Comix*. DC's new "weird" humor comic, *Plop,* featured many Wolverton covers and a few interior pieces, and in 1974, Stan Lee and Denis Kitchen teamed up to put out an underground magazine which featured the last known new art by Wolverton, *Comix Book*. Wolverton's strips appeared alongside underground cartoonists one third his age, and though his advanced age made Calvin and Weird Creatures rendered in a somewhat shakier hand than his classic strips, it was undisputable that as a cartoonist, he still had it right up to the end. Wolverton died on December 31, 1978.

So many reprints of Wolverton's work have appeared in recent years from Fantagraphics, Dark Horse, Kitchen Sink Comix and Pure Images, that many people think most of his work has been reprinted. Yet, there are literally hundreds of pages that have never seen print since their original publication 40-60 years ago.

I never had the privilege to meet Wolverton, and did not appreciate his work until after his death, but he continues to influence and delight new generations and his memory lives on. In 1951, he did several radio broadcasts in Portland and snippets of these were released (with accompanying artwork) on a flexi-disc entitled *Wolvertunes*. Basil sings, plays the ukelele and tells bad jokes. It's nearly unlistenable, but his real comedy is found on the countless comic strips which bear his name; gems to be unearthed like buried treasure for those who, like me, enjoy the digging. This is my way of paying him back for all the joy he has brought to my life.

SCHLOPP!

The following publications were used as source material for this article: Graphic Story Magazine *#14 (Winter 1971-72) Basil Wolverton interview conducted by Dick Voll.;* It's A Fanzine *#35 (Aug 1986) "The Brain Bat Of Comics" by Mike Barson;* Epic Illustrated *#12 (Jun 1982) "The World According To Wolverton" by Ron Goulart; and* Life Magazine *(May 5, 1947).*

READY, HEDY!
OW!
CRUNCH!
NOW GET OUT OF TOWN, McBLAST, AND DON'T EVER SHOW UP AGAIN!
THINK YER CLEVER, EH?--
FRANK'S FLEALESS FLOPHOUSE
--BUT YUH CAN'T OUTSMART ME!

Charles F. Murphy, 44, former New York City magistrate, is shown with his family as he receives news of his appointment as comic book "czar," with full power to enforce the new comic-book code. Murphy says, "If I can satisfy my conscience, I'll know I'm doing my job. It's up to the public to serve as a 'panel jury' and decide whether or not I can win their vote of confidence."

HOW THEY'RE CLEANING UP THE COMIC BOOKS

A new code with teeth in it, and a "czar" with full authority to enforce it, point to a big campaign to clean up the comic books

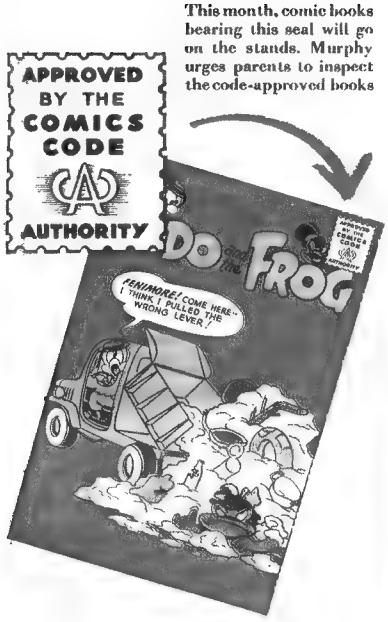
Originally published in the March 1955 issue of Better Homes & Gardens

During the course of this month, some 50 million moppets and teen-agers will plunk down one or more dimes of their pin money for brightly colored comic books, ranging in name from *Action Comics* to *Ziggy Pig*. Some anxious parents concerned with the reading habits of their children will note that something new has been added to the familiar gaudy product. That "something new" is a rectangular, black-and-white seal imprinted conspicuously in the upper right-hand corner of each magazine's cover. Almost twice the size of a postage stamp, the seal bears six reassuring words: "APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY."

This seal is another and the latest answer to the comic-book industry's bitterest critics. During the next 30 days, as millions of comic books introducing this seal flood the magazine racks of candy stores, supermarkets, and pharmacies throughout the country, the public will be informed that the seal is the symbol of the industry's new policy of stern self-censorship.

Just how much faith can you have in this seal? Is it a bona-fide guarantee of wholesome, healthy entertainment for youngsters? Or is it a phony frill calculated to take the comic-book publishers out of the public doghouse? And just what is the "Comics Code Authority"? Is it headed by a man of integrity, qualified and empowered to police the reading medium most popular with our nation's young minds? Or is he a hired stooge for the multimillion-dollar comic-book industry, letting the publishers use his seal of approval as a shield against the slings and arrows of public opinion?

BY MORT WEISINGER



This month, comic books bearing this seal will go on the stands. Murphy urges parents to inspect the code-approved books

Comics' "new look"

These are the questions cynical mothers and fathers will be asking themselves the next time Junior abandons playground or playroom for the picture-print adventures of *Congo Bill, Plastic Man,* or *Wonder Woman.* To bring you the answers, *Better Homes & Gardens* assigned this writer to investigate the facts behind the comic-industry's "new look." Because it is a conceded fact that kids and comic books are virtually inseparable, this report will be of vital interest to every parent.

Comic-book houses are on the hot seat today as the result of conscienceless editing by a minority of unethical publishers within their ranks. While the field is vastly dominated by the so-called "good" comics—sports, adventure, Western, science fiction, and animal stories—it is because of the past activities of the lunatic fringe that the entire industry has been smeared.

When private citizens inspected the contents of the horror-type comics published by this mercenary minority, they were shocked to find such themes as cannibalism, torture, and grave digging. Public indignation reached such heights that in many communities the objectionable books were burned, banned, or boycotted. In several cities, local legislation was enacted to prohibit the sale of comic books.

Publishers suffered

As a result of this grass-roots rebellion against offensive comic books, even the ethical publishers started to suffer. Circulations dipped. It was paradoxical that while parents would allow their children to enjoy the six-shooting adventures of Hopalong Cassidy on the TV screen, following his exploits in a comic magazine was verboten. The crusade against the bad comics had caused thousands of parents to indict the harmless ones. All the publishers were depicted as "monsters," despite the fact that the majority of them are responsible citizens.

A special joint legislative committee appointed by New York State to investigate comics publications summed it up this way: "The entire industry is con-

Ridicule of boy wearing glasses

ONLY WAY YUH'LL GIT 'EM IS OVER MY DEAD... UH-H-H!
YORE DEAD BODY! RECKON YUH'RE RIGHT... YUH SHOULDN'T O' REACHED FOR THAT RIFLE!
BANG
HE WAS WOUNDED... FORTUNATELY ONLY A FLESH WOUND.
YUH SHOULDN'T O' REACHED FOR THAT RIFLE!

Emphasis on violence and death

EARLY THAT MORNING, AT LUCILLE'S APARTMENT...
WHERE CAN I MEET YOU, STEVE? IT'S IMPORTANT.
EARLY THAT MORNING, AT LUCILLE'S APARTMENT...
WHERE CAN I MEET YOU, STEVE? IT'S IMPORTANT.

Suggestive drawing questioned

demned because of the objectionable comic books that are published, and public reaction and feeling are not confined to the individual offenders.... The Committee therefore recommends that the comic-book industry itself, under the leadership of the largest producers, take immediate steps to organize an effective, all-inclusive, self-regulatory association with an independent administrator without industry connections acting as the review agency."

Realizing that this was the handwriting on the wall, and that the industry's second chance for survival was to establish a voluntary system of self-censorship analogous to Hollywood's "Breen Office," the majority of the publishers went into action in less time than it takes Superman to fly around the world.

In what has since turned out to be the industry's most historic meeting, 24 of the field's publishers, responsible among them for 338 different magazines, gathered together one afternoon last September to form an organization known as the Comic Magazine Association of America. Also recruited as members were representatives of 7 distributing companies, 6 printing firms, and 5 engraving companies. By a unanimous vote, all the members agreed to appoint a comics "czar" to police the industry. They further agreed that they would not publish, print, illustrate, or distribute any comics material not bearing the czar's seal of approval. Violation of this agreement would call for expulsion from the association.

Dell Publishing Company, the nation's largest single comics-book publisher, did not join the association. Dell maintains that its own high standards eliminate objectionable material. As this goes to press, it is reported that Classics Illustrated and Entertaining Comics have also refused to join. Parents who wish ratings of these holdouts—and all other comic books for that matter—can obtain them by writing the Cincinnati Committee on the Evaluation of Comic Books, Box 1486, Cincinnati, Ohio. Rating sheets are supplied at 5 cents each, or $16 per thousand.

Murphy appointed head

Next step for the Comic Magazine Association was to find the "czar" best qualified to fill the stormiest job in modern publishing history. After screening more than a dozen good men, they selected tall and big-framed, 44-year-old Charles F. Murphy, popular New York City magistrate originally appointed by the late, incorruptible Fiorello La Guardia.

Judge Murphy's record speaks for itself. During the past five years, he has organized many projects to combat and reduce juvenile delinquency. In 1951, alarmed by the increase in the number of teenagers appearing before his bench, he called a conference of high- school principals and other educators, out of which came a series of projects to combat juvenile delinquency in New York City. Judge Murphy is also founder and president of Teen Plan, Inc., a private organization devoted to helping teenagers find suitable careers.

"Comics need face lifting"

"Gentlemen," this mild-mannered Irishman told the assembled publishers, "the comics need a face lifting. It is not enough that horror and sex must be outlawed from your pages. If we're to begin Operation Clean-Up, let's go all out. From cover to cover, we must eliminate any nuances that may tend to violate the standards of good taste. For example, we must discourage bad grammar. I'm against stereotyped characterizations which tend to portray Italians as organ-grinders, Jews as pawnshop owners, and Negroes as porters. We must work out a code of do's and don'ts with teeth, steel-sharp teeth, in it. And you must grant me *carte blanche* authority to administer this code in respect to everything that goes into your publications, from a cover to a caption. Unless you promise me this privilege—with no strings attached—you'll have to get yourself another boy!"

In the end, the inevitable grumblings gave way to unanimous concession, and Operation Clean-Up bulldozed its way through in the form of a code closely patterned after the standards established by the motion-picture, radio, and television industries.

Restriction examples

In many respects, the new comics code has sterner moral standards than any other entertainment medium. Section A, which deals with editorial matter, imposes 30 important restrictions. Here are some examples:

1. Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal, to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals. **2.** No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime. **3.** Criminals shall not be presented so as to be rendered glamorous or to occupy a position that creates a desire for emulation. **4.** Scenes of excessive violence shall be prohibited. Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife-and gunplay, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated. **5.** Policemen, judges, government officials, and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority. **6.** No unique or unusual methods of concealing weapons shall be shown. **7.** Scenes dealing with or subject matter associated with walking dead, torture, vampires, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited. **8.** Ridicule or attack on any religious or on any racial group is never permissible. **9.** Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols that have acquired undesirable meanings are forbidden. **10.** Any references to physical afflictions or deformities shall be avoided. **11.** Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. **12.** The treatment of love-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage. Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable. Illicit sex relations are neither to be hinted at nor portrayed.

Advertisements screened

The code also cracks down on the objectionable advertisements that used to seep into some of the comic books. Inspect this month's crop of seal-approved comics, and you will find that the big purge has eliminated ads featuring the sale of switch-blade knives, realistic guns, and other dangerous weapons. The code also prohibits liquor and tobacco advertising, ads offering fireworks, ads dealing with the sale of gambling equipment.

Under the strict provisions of the code, sex ads are doomed to take a permanent holiday from the pages of comic books. The sale of "sex instruction" books, picture post cards, "pin-ups," "art studies," or any other reproduction of nude or seminude figures is prohibited. Also taboo are advertisements of medical, health, or toiletry products not endorsed by the American Medical Association or the American Dental Association.

To plug up any possible loopholes not covered by the code, Judge Murphy asked for—and was granted—the inclusion of a final, "catchall" clause, to wit:

"All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited."

Code distributed

Thousands of copies of the code were printed and distributed to every editor, writer, artist, and production man in the business. Released to civic groups, law-enforcement agencies, and church groups, the code drew unprecedented acclaim. Among the numberous organizations that went on record as endorsing the industry's self-regulation program were the Boy

Scouts of America, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the American Legion, the Police Athletic League, and the St. Louis Council of Parent-Teacher Associations.

"This tremendous public response to the announcement of our program holds out great hope for our future activities," stated John L. Goldwater, president of the Comic Magazine Association. "Our next major task is to show the nation that we really mean business—that the comics-magazine industry has fully accepted its responsibility to the parents and youth of America. We are confident that, with Judge Murphy's guidance and the complete cooperation of our industry, we can fulfill that responsibility."

How grimly the new association meant business is illustrated by the immediate casualties suffered by some of its members the day after the code went into effect, October 26, 1954. Because one section of the code stipulated that no comic magazine shall use the words horror or terror in its title, at one fell swoop 33 of this objectionable variety simply ceased to exist. Also victims of the Murphy massacre were thousands of dollars worth of scripts and drawings in publishers' inventories which had to be scrapped because of nonconformance with the new regulations.

Due to the exigencies of publication, it was agreed that March, 1955, would be the target date for comic books with the "new look." There were frantic last-minute deletions, rewrites, and revisions. Bosomy heriones underwent a process that came to be known as "Dior-izing."

Five reviewers hired

To handle the tidal flow of material submitted for approval to his office, Judge Murphy hired a staff of five female reviewers, all of them with college backgrounds and other qualifications pertinent to this specialized chore. Joan T. Nourse, for example holds a Ph.D. degree, was formerly a member of the English Department of Hunter College, and is known for her lectures on morality. Dena Reed for 12 years served as assistant editor in the story department of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Sue Flynn put in a 10-year stint with the U.S. Information Agency, worked on the Voice of America broadcasts. Mrs. Esther L. Moscow is the mother of two girls, an ex-librarian, and served 7 years in the office of New York's mayor. Marjorie McGill is currently the youth adviser of the Catholic Youth Organization in New Haven, Connecticut.

"I have picked a distaff staff," Judge Murphy told me, "because it has been my experience that women are more sensitive than men in most matters of good taste." To learn the processing a comic book must undergo in order to merit the seal of approval, this reporter visited Judge Murphy's office to study the operation. "You are just in time," pert, businesslike Sue Flynn greeted me. "I'm about to review the March issue of *Mr. District Attorney*—that's a comic book based on the TV program with the same name."

Miss Flynn pointed to a 6-inch stack of black-and-white art pages on her desk. Starting with the cover, she devoted several minutes to each page, carefully studying the scene, caption, and speech balloons in each of the six panels. Whenever she finished a page that did not require any changes, she reached for a rubber stamp that bore the words, "Approved by the Comics Code Authority," and imprinted her official blessings.

Panel 3, page 16, however, made her reach for her blue pencil. "See this scene?" she said. "It shows one man hitting another with a blackjack. That's against the code. I'll suggest that the editor have the scene redrawn so that the knockout is accomplished with an uppercut."

Issues microfilmed

Outside of this minor infraction, *Mr. District Attorney* received a clean bill of health. "We can't O.K. the entire issue, however, until this change is made," Miss Flynn explained. She led me over to a microfilm camera in another office. "After a complete issue is approved, every one of the 32 pages is photographed on microfilm. Later, when the issue comes off the press, we will compare the published copy with our microfilm record to see whether any unauthorized substitutions were made on any of the pages after they left our office."

Later, in Judge Murphy's office, I found him in a hassle with an editor. The controversy involved a story based on the classic, *Treasure Island.* Several scenes in the comic version of this classic showed villainous pirates impaling each other with swords.

"I won't pass this sequence," said the judge. "It's too violent."

"But we're sticking to the actual Stevenson story," wailed the editor. "Why, the book is even more bloodthirsty."

"Sorry," ruled the judge, "but that's no defense. There's a great deal of material in the classics—and even in fairy tales—that we won't allow. In Hansel and Gretel, the witch gets stuffed into a blazing oven. That's a gruesome picture, any way you look at it."

Although it is physically impossible for Murphy to review all the stories himself, he screens a great proportion of them personally. He has a great trust in the judgement of his staff members and holds meetings with them at least once daily to discuss all borderline cases.

Despite this gimleteyed vigilance, Judge Murphy is realistic enough to admit that, in the beginning, his office will make mistakes. And, because the industry is still the most vulnerable sitting duck in the communications field, he knows that each blooper will serve as an arsenal of ammunition for the anticomic snipers.

"I'm not offering the familiar 'we're only human' excuse to alibi any early imperfections," says the judge. "Some will be due to honest errors of judgement. For example, a battle sequence involving cowboys and Indians may be considered by some as excessively violent. On the other hand, slambang action of this sort has been considered traditional entertainment fare for small fry ever since the Buffalo Bill dime novels of years ago. It's all in the way it's presented. When you realize that we must pass on more than 57,000 panels of illustrative matter a month, sometimes the thin line that separates such a scene from the boundary of acceptable action to the area of 'excessive violence' is seen out of focus...."

Most encouraging, Judge Murphy reports a healthy trend of cooperation from the publishers. They have found he means business and have conditioned themselves to realize that undiluted respect for his principles will mean good business for them. And now that Operation Clean-Up has become a *fait accompli,* they agree that it's the best thing that ever hit the industry.

In the final analysis, however, it will be the public who will have to determine whether the new code is curing or camouflaging the cancer spots in the comic books. Conscientious parents should inspect the seal-approved books brought home by their youngsters and judge contents in respect to their own instinctive standards of good taste. Judge Murphy urges parent to go even further—*to write him for a free copy of the new Comics Code* so that they might study its rules and regulations and see whether they are being enforced in the magazines that bear his seal of approval. (Send requests on post card to: Comics Code Authority, 41 E. 42nd St., New York City, New York.)

As Judge Murphy sums it up: "A lot of people call me a czar. The only czar I know is my conscience. If I can always satisfy it, I know I'm doing my job. Meanwhile, it will be up to the public to serve as a literal 'panel jury' and decide whether or not I can earn their vote of confidence."

Thanks to Gary Weickart for contributing research materials.

Continued from page 27

The break finally came in 1953, when the National editorial arrangement was subdivided into specific groups, each with its own editor, who in turn had his own stable of writers and artists. Rarely did a member of one man's stable cross the hallway to work for another.

When Superman went to TV, Weisinger joined producer Ellsworth as story editor.

"Every year the New York office would lend me Mort Weisinger for a few weeks to act as story editor," Ellsworth once reminisced. "Together we knew as much about Superman as it was possible to know. So in advance of production we'd lock ourselves in a room and work on stories. Once we did it on the train trip from New York to Los Angeles. By the time we were ready to hand out writing assignments we were able to give the writers outlines of what we wanted—not just so-called premises but complete step-by-step storylines in almost every case."

Bizarro, Krypto, & Supergirl

When Ellsworth stepped down as editorial director in the '50s, Weisinger took over the Superman titles, leaving Schiff with the "less prestigious" Batman family. For in the post-war period, comics sales were in decline and superheroes were fading.

With writer Otto Binder, the former Solar Sales client who had coached him on the ins and outs of comic books back in 1940, Weisinger set about reinventing and modernizing Superman.

Weisinger had a soft spot for two writers in particular, Ed Hamilton, whom he read as a teenager and edited at Standard, and perhaps the most surprising of all, Jerry Seigel.

"I originated such characters as Bizarro, Krypto, Supergirl, Superbaby, et cetera, and assigned them to various writers for scripting," Weisinger told *The Legion Outpost* in 1974. "I also invented the Bottle of Kandor, the Phantom Zone… the 'LL' running gag—Lois Lane, Lana Lang, Lori Lemaris, et al… the properties of the various forms of kryptonite—with the exception of Green K, which was the invention of Robert Maxwell, producer of the *Superman* radio series which featured Superman; Maxwell also introduced Jimmy Olsen there. I think the innovation I'm proudest of was the use of the imaginary story to present stories that weren't otherwise possible. And I also created the series, 'Tales of Krypton.'"

One of the elements that surely came from Weisinger was Superman's Fortress of Solitude. He had earlier cribbed the idea of a North Pole laboratory-hideaway for his Captain Future and now with *Doc Savage* off the stands, cribbed it again.

"I think my greatest contribution to Superman was to give him a 'mythology' which covered all bases," Weisinger added. "All this makes Superman credible. I also went to lengths to elaborate on the 'Superman family,' and cross-pollinated these relationships by simultaneously interweaving their causes and effects in magazines appearing during one month."

Although Weisinger was notoriously tyrannical with his writers and artists—stories abound of him browbeating, even terrorizing scripters ranging from pros like Batman co-creator Bill Finger to his discovery, teenaged Legion of Super Heroes writer, Jim Shooter…

Weisinger had a soft spot for two writers in particular, Ed Hamilton, whom he read as a teenager and edited at Standard, and perhaps the most surprising of all, Jerry Seigel.

"Jerry, whom I consider the most competent of all the Superman writers," Weisinger revealed in *The Legion Outpost*, "established the foundation for the series. What his successors did was just embroidery, including my own contributions. Seigel was the best emotional writer of them all—as in the unforgettable 'Death of Luthor.'

Still, even that began to wear on him.

"Maybe times I'd be walking down the street and I'd say to myself, 'A guy who thinks up story ideas for Superman has to be nuts.' At least he'd have to think like a wild man," Weisinger lamented.

"In all, with assists from an agile staff, I produced more than 2,000 stories and plotted scores of TV films. The incessant deadline pressures sent me to a shrink, gave me an ulcer, hypertension and insomnia."

One of his last published pieces was a *Parade* article, "I Flew With Superman," October 23, 1977, in which he reflected on his long comics career.

"Am I sorry I split from Superman after having virtually been his soulmate for 30 years." Weisinger reflected. "I have mixed emotions. To be honest, Superman gave me a hangup. I resented basking in his reflected glory. I was jealous of him. But then I realized Superman had the same frustrations."

Times were changing. Over at Marvel, Spider-Man was cutting into Superman's 40 year supremacy. Where before letters often challenged logical lapses or crowed over booboos that had gotten past Weisinger, as the '60s neared their end, the character of the letters began changing. Readers wondered why Superman wasn't solving social ills or dealing with the seemingly endless stalemate in Vietnam.

"I sweated over those Vietnam letters for a week before coming up with a halfway good answer," Weisinger told a reporter. "I finally replied that 'We figure the U.S. is powerful enough to reach a just and proud settlement of the war without Superman.' Now as I look back, I realize the answer was a cop-out. I could have done better if I had said, 'Superman doesn't believe either side is morally right in this struggle,' or 'Superman had never killed any man or animal in his entire existence, and he's not going to start now.' If you think back, the only time an enemy of Superman ever lost his life was when he self-destructed."

After 30 years, and at 55 ten years short of retirement age, Weisinger found himself something of a brontosaurus.

"Today's kids are too much for me," he observed at the time. "They're so far ahead of us in sophistication. The old villains aren't

really their villains. Maybe they don't relate as much to pure fiction and diabolical plots to take over the world. Maybe they want stories that fit their experience better. Maybe they've seen so much, it's limited rather than stretched their imaginations.

Anyway, I knew I'd had it. Dreaming up socially-conscious plots on the kid level really turns me off."

But there were other reasons. Weisinger had sold a best-seller, *The Contest*, which in turn sold to the movies. He had hit the bigtime. And made sure his co-workers knew it. The $20,000 advance check was thumbtacked to a DC wall for a solid week.

However, Weisinger, still busy at National, didn't really write the novel. He only plotted it, turning the writing over to a number of writers who simultaneously drafted their sections, comic book assembly-line fashion, but didn't share in the royalties. The true number of writers may never been known, but they include old-time pulpsters like Ryerson Johnson to comics hands such as David Vern and Bob Haney. Dorothy Woolfolk reportedly edited the melange of styles into a seamless whole.

"Anyway, I knew I'd had it. Dreaming up socially-conscious plots on the kid level really turns me off."

The unexpected death of an old pulp-writing friend, Frank Gruber, also played a role in Weisinger's decision to make a clean break from comic books. He told friends he had several unrealized dreams and wanted to pursue them while still relatively young.

Weisinger plunged into a new book project, *The Amazing Aquarius*, about a presidential astrologer, but it would never see publication.

For years, Weisinger had warned Schwartz that if anything happened to him, he was next in line to edit *Superman*. Schwartz always said he didn't want the job. But when the time came, he took it. The era of Mort Weisinger was over.

Yet in 1978, on the eve of the premier of *Superman–the Movie*, the new improved Superman wasn't cutting it either and DC, casting about for a solution, was on the verge of asking Mort to come back out of semi-retirement—he was doing the college circuit lecturing on the "Superman Mystique"—when Weisinger was felled by a heart attack on May 7.

At the time, his death was duly noted by a comics fandom that thought it had outgrown him. Yet nearly twenty years later there is no editor left on the scene with his credentials—or his unique ability to sell comic books to young readers.

Will Murray is the author of some 50 novels in such popular series as The Destroyer, Doc Savage, The Executioner *and* Mars Attacks, *as well as numerous short stories and articles. He is the Boston correspondent for* Starlog *magazine. A life-long Marvel Comics fan, he recalls buying* Fantastic Four *#4 off the racks, and is justifiably proud of having injected the notorious Squirrel Girl into the Marvel Universe, aided and abetted by Spider-Man co-creator, Steve Ditko.*

We'd like you to write for us!

Contact the CBM Editorial Department

619•437•1996

THE MATT SCHIFFMAN REPORT

It's a Bronze Boom!

There is a fine line between a "down market" and a "collectors' market." The distinction might well be defined this way: a "down market" is where collectors have abandoned collecting for greener pastures. A "collectors' market" is where collectors are still willing to spend, but selectively. Those that have discounted their books and have brought prices to market levels are finding collectors lining up to purchase. This seems to apply to the VF- and below markets in Silver and the FN to VG range in Gold. The money is clearly there... it just seems to be looking for the right home....

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-45)

As the market finds new levels of comfort in these lowered prices, books are selling. Even big ticket books strictly graded are moving out. Also plenty of collectors out there are doing their math: Batman #1 in GD to GD- for $5,100 or a heavily restored VG book for $9,800 (?). While GD books (and even lesser condition material) seem to find a quick home, so does unrestored high grade Golden Age. Mile Highs still have the cachet, while other pedigrees can only benefit from the huge multiples that continue to be paid.

Sales: Boy Commandos #7 VF/NM $280; Buck Rogers #1 VG $750; Contact #3 FN $148; Coo Coo #1 GD $70; Detective #13 PR $750, #66 GD $395; Dynamic Comics #2 VG $200; Four Color #33 GD $95; Human Torch #6 aFN $450; Military Comics #1 GD $900; New Funnies #7 GD/VG $185; Nickel Comics #1 VG/VG- $650; Our Gang #1 GD $180; Rangers #1 GD $240; Thrilling Comics #2 FN $390; Top Notch #1 FR/PR $295; and Superman #2 GD $1,250.

Atom Age (1946-1956)

Even with the frenzy seen in the Silver Age and Golden Age booms earlier this decade, few would have predicted the sale of a VG romance book for 4X guide. Collectors are competing with speculators to find any copy of certain books and are willing to step up and pay. Typically, speculation on "in vogue" markets seems to cool after a year or so... but that doesn't seem to be the case here, as enthusiasm for comics from this era shows no sign of slowing down.

Sales: Dagar #19 FN- $145; Desperado #1 VG/FN $75; Golden Arrow #6 FN $105; Intimate Confessions #7 FN $110; Little Lotta #1 VF $200; Magic #123 VF $47; Millie the Model Annual #1 VG $95; Miss Beverly Hills #1 GD $72; Moon Girl #1 VG- $145; My Past #7 VF/NM $190; Namora #2 GD $145; Silver Streak #24 GD $42; Spectacular Stories Mag #4 FN $200; Thunda #1 GD $120.

Silver Age (1956-1969)

Did "The Guide" (Overstreet Update) kill the Golden Goose? So far, just the opposite seems to be true. Most had a definite opinion as to the outcome and the split was about 70/30 in favor of The Guide's price adjustments. Those sellers that dropped prices in line with The Guide found a very receptive audience. To my amazement, there are a great many collectors out there that have only just now heard about The Guide that was shipped with CBM #54 and have no idea about the adjustments (better subscribe to CBM guys). Pre-hero Atlas and DC continue to be extremely popular, and there is ever increasing momentum in the Four-Color TV related books as well.

Sales: Amazing Adventures #5 FR $12; Amazing Spider-Man #1 GD $900; Eighty Page Giant #1 GD $19; Our Fighting Forces #49 FN $44; Green Lantern #59 FN $32; Hawkman #4 VF $110; Our Army at War #81 GD- $199; Journey into Mystery #62 aVF $100; JLA #2 FN $175; Lois Lane #4 VF $220; Sgt. Fury #4 NM $135 SGT. Sgt. Rock's Prize Battle Tales FN $88; Tales of Suspense #52 VF/NM $160; X-Men #1 FR $190, #23 NM $80.

Bronze Age (1970-1979)

We've all heard about the early '70's books that are in *Continued on page 72*

MARKET REPORTS

GREG WHITE • COMICS & COLLECTIBLES
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KISSIMMEE, FLORIDA 34741
(407) 870-0400

Hello from the land of fantasy! Our Central Florida weather has been cool this winter but sales have warmed up. We have seen terrific response to the 1998 Overstreet Update Price Guide. The across-the-board reduction in prices on fine or lower condition books have spurred sales and renewed some interest. Now we need to see further reduction on most high grade comics and we will be heading in the right direction. We also are at the point in this hobby that the Overstreet Guide should offer some pricing information on restored books. This is an untapped area in price guide-land and should be addressed. I have been able to purchase many pre-1965 collections as of late at very reasonable rates. This will allow us to offer the books at a very competitive price. We have a long way to go in this hobby before we once again reach a comfortable level, however, I have seen some positive signs in recent months. It will be interesting to see how the rest of the year unfolds!

Silver Age (1955-69)

Marvel sales have picked up of late. What is especially nice is that we have been able to move a number of mid and lower grade books at close to Guide price. Hopefully that trend will continue. Amazing Spider-man, X-Men and Fantastic Four have been our best sellers of late. DC sales remain solid. Batman always sells from this period. The problem is replacing stock on certain DC books. They just don't come in as often as the Marvels. Hi grade 1950's DC remain in demand. Dell and Gold Key TV comics remain steady if *Continued on page 72*

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SCHIFFMAN REPORT

huge demand see John Canfield's market report elsewhere in this issue), but comic paraphernalia is just as hot. Albums, stamps, black light posters, figures, etc have found a cross-over audience the likes of which haven't been seen in many years! As scarcity still rules the market, collectors are beginning to recognize some of the great covers and key books of the era and are bidding them ever upwards. High grade 100 page and larger format books still lead the way in popularity, and even a few collectors are willing to go out on a limb and pay very high prices for previously unheralded titles such as Harvey, Homer, and Peter the Pest, etc.

Sales: Adventure #431-440 (set) NM $220; Beyond the Unknown #1 VF $16; Harvey #1 FN $28; Homer #1 FN $72; Hulk #181 FN $198; Iron Fist #14 VF $48; Ringo Kid #2 NM $11; Marvel Spotlight #12 VF/NM $14; Marvel Team Up #1 GD $12; Strange Sports Stories #1 VF/NM $12; Superfriends #1 FN $14; Tomb of Dracula #1 NM $38; Trigger Twins #1 NM $9; TV Stars #1 NM $11; Wonder Woman #200 NM $36; X-Men #94 GD $65; Young Romance #199 FN $32.

Another area of growing interest to comic book collectors is pulps. As cover collectors grow in number, the pulps are experiencing a real increase in popularity, appreciation, and demand. Also, pulps are amazingly inexpensive, especially considering their age and scarcity. It's also apparent that long time pulp collectors are anxious to keep pulps out of the spotlight, as they are keenly fearful of increased competition and price increases in a market that had remained stable (stagnant?) for decades. This attitude is something they openly share.

Finally, a large ultra high grade original collection was recently discovered in Washington state, with many of the rare, sought-after titles. I'll have the sales prices next month, but for now---the cat is out of the bag and huge dollar amounts are changing hands even as you read this.

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 70

priced right. Unfortunately, most Overstreet pricing on these books is inflated.

Sales: Spider-Man #2 FN/VF $1,200; X-Men 3 FN $150; #5 VF $225; Batman #171 FR $40; Daredevil #1 VG $195; Superman Annual #7 VG $40.

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age/Atom Age (1933-55)

We purchased a few nice collections this month. One group had over 100 1940's books from Dell and Fawcett. Many Four Colors, Disney and Capt. Marvel. Another group included DCs from the 1940-1950 period featuring a strong run of Superman. This stock should keep us active for a while. Demand has been steady for Golden Age. DC and Timely are tops. War covers and Lou Fine/L.B. Cole books remain popular. We have found that Chesler books have cooled off a bit. As usual all grades are selling if priced right. Certain titles still need to be discounted.

Sales: Superman #8 VG $400; Batman #5 FN $250; Rangers #12 GD $30; Champion #4 GD $25; Human Torch #2 FN $1200; Archie #23 VG $25.

Artwork & Toys

One collection that came in had a couple of nice Murphy Anderson pages and some Frank McLaughlin art from Charlton. Also a group of conceptual animation drawings from Legend of Mulan came in—neat pieces. On the toy front we picked up five Aurora models un built in the original boxes! Boy those were neat kits! I don't care how many video games/CD Roms a kid has today he is still missing out by not having those great Aurora kits of old to build! I am anxious to see how these kits sell.We have not had great demand for older comic-related toys this month. It run shot and cold. We also picked up a complete set of the hardcover slip cased EC collection. What great reading! It will be fun to see how these wonderful books sell.

Sales: Ballo animation drawing $50; 007 Corgi die cast car loose $40; Capt. Action Doll in box $350, Two Elvis 1950's 45rpm records with picture sleeve $10 each.

1998 has begun on an optimistic note. Here's hoping the year plays out a bit stronger than last. Comic book conventions in particular need to rebound with reasonable sales levels to help out our year.

JOHN CANFIELD
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A small group of comic book collectors have been regularly buying and selling books via Internet and Email auctions. It is important to mention that none of us are full-time dealers. We are all hobbyists who grew up reading comics during the Bronze Age. What follows are confirmed sales reports from myself and other collectors who buy, sell, and trade on the Internet and participate in Email auctions.

Overall, most of the books sold generally sell under guide or near guide. There have been some surprising prices on select Bronze Age books. DC Bronze Age is selling briskly and often at multiples of Guide... especially books like 100 page giants, 52 page giants, horror/mystery titles, and romance titles. Marvel Bronze Age sales are unremarkable unless it is an obscure or off-beat title.

Of note is the fact that some extremely high prices were documented: Adventure #416 (100 pager) VF $41; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #4 FN $71; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #4 VF $89; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #6 NM $68; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #9 NM $59; Homer the Happy Ghost #1 NM $50; Our Love Story #1 FN $26; Secrets of Haunted House #1 NM $35; Super DC Giant #21 (Love 1971) $177; Wonder Woman #199 VF $36.

My personal sales report includes: Batman #238 (100 pager) VF $25; Chili #1 VF $21; Date With Debbi #1 VF $8; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #4 VF $65; Peter the Little Pest #1 VF $15.50; Peter the Little Pest #2 VF $10.50; Peter the Little Pest #3 VF $12.50; Petey (Peter the Little Pest) #4 VF $14.50; Young Love #107 VF $28; Young Love #108 VF $23; Young Love #109 VF $25; Young Love #111 VF $25; Young Romance #197 VF $29; Young Romance #199 VF $20; Young Romance #204 VF $32.

Tom Raski reports the following sales: DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #20 (Batman) VF $40; DC Special #4 VF $36; Famous First Editions (Action #1) VF $20; Limited Collectors Edition C-36 (The Bible) VF $12; Our Love Story #5 VF $14; Superman #245 (100 pager) FN $22; Weird War Tales #8 VF $12; Weird Western Tales #12 VF $23; Young Romance #200 VF $40; Young Romance #204 VF $30; Young Love #111 VF $41.

Ed Winters reports the following sales: All-Star Comics #58 NM $12; Batman Family #1 NM $12; Homer the Happy Ghost #1 FN $30; Isis #1 VF $7.50; Justice, Inc #1 NM $7; Justice Inc. #4 NM $7; Larry Harmon's Laurel and Hardy #1 VF $56; Limited Collectors Edition C-32 (Ghosts) VF $10; Night Nurse #1 GD $5; Shazam #8 VF $12; Weird War Tales #1 VF $50; Young Love #107 VF $30 & NM $50; Young Love #109 NM $50.

Dan Cusimano reports the following sales: Action #443 (100 pager) FN $14.50; Chili #1 FN $18; DC Special #3 NM $27; House of Secrets #81 VG $10; Isis #1-8 NM $31; Super DC Giant S-19 VG $23.50; Super DC Giant S-23 VF $25; Weird War Tales #1 FN $28; Weird War Tales #36 VF $6; Welcome Back Kotter #1-6 (#1 FN, #2-6 NM) $24.50; Young Romance #172 VF $15.

Jim Lowery reports the following sales: Action Comics #443 (100 pagers) VF $16; Brave and the Bold #115 (100 pager) VF $18.50; Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love #1 FN $20; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #6 VF $38; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #7 VF $22.50; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #9 VG $17.50 & NM $59; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #14 VF $22.50; DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #16 NM $58; DC Special #1 NM $41; Flash #232 NM $35; Super DC Giant #14 VF $27; Super DC Giant #16 VF $11.50; Super DC Giant #19 (Jerry Lewis) VF $51; Young Love #109 NM $65.

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Hello, everyone! I hope the new year has been prosperous for you comic collectors out there. There's so much great material being offered for sale, it's enough to make one dizzy! If you've been waiting for that moment to buy, now is the time. Values have been adjusted on Silver in the Overstreet Guide, Golden Age is selling at the lowest prices it's been in years, and '70's books are still cheap enough to pick up (but do it soon!). This transitional period will only last a short time, so take full advantage of it. Ok, I'll stop flapping my lips and get on with the market report!

Bronze Age (1970-79)

It seems that the passage of time has now pushed '70's books into the limelight. People are starting to realize these books are 25 years old (the same age as most of the Silver Age when it hit big). But there are a few factors that must be considered with this genre. First, most '70's books are plentiful in average grade, I think even more so than Silver. So the number one rule many collectors have been following when pursuing these comics is HIGH GRADE. Because there are zillions of copies of '70's comics floating around, collectors can afford to be picky. Also, rarity has played a big role in this genre, more so than when Silver Age was exploding. People pursued the popular characters with Silver Age, while it seems that the more rare and obscure comics rule the '70's genre. Romance, funny animal, teen humor, etc. seem to be the choice of collectors. One can draw a parallel between 40's and '60s (superhero) and '50s and '70s (everything BUT superhero). Indeed, most of the mainstream '70's titles, especially Marvel titles, are not selling as briskly as the more obscure ones.

The hottest company (by far) is DC, because they're much tougher to find in decent shape, and DC put out much more weird stuff. In DC, the hottest titles are the horror (House of Mystery, House of Secrets, Unexpected, Ghosts, Weird Mystery Tales, etc), Romance (Young Love, Young Romance, Sinister House of Secret Love, Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love, etc.), and especially giant size issues (100 pagers, 52 pagers, DC Special, Super DC Giant, etc.). Some of the hottest single comics include 100 page Super Spectacular #4, 5, 6; Ghosts #1; Weird War Tales #1; Super DC Giant #13-27; Batman #238. Keep an eye on Weird Mystery Tales #2, the whole Super DC Giant series, the DC Special series, and the later House of Mystery and House of Secrets (with some fantastic artwork in there).

1970's Marvel have cooled off considerably, with many taking a dip in price in the latest Overstreet "The Guide" update. Titles like Marvel Spotlight, Marvel Premiere, Spider-man, Astonishing Tales, etc. have decreased significantly (Spidey #129, first Punisher, went from $250 down to $90!!!). There are a few that are hot, though. Some of Marvel's goofball titles are doing well, such as Homer the Happy Ghost, Night Nurse, and My Love. Also, Marvel Spotlight #2 (first Werewolf by night) and Amazing Adventures #11 (first Beast series) are doing well. Keep an eye on the horror titles reprinting the monster books of the early '60's, Fear #1-10, and some of the romance stuff (Millie the Model, etc.). There are many obscure Marvels that no one has caught onto yet....

I'm auctioning off full runs of '70's DC on March 7th, (which will be over by the time you read this). Next time I'll report the sales from the auction.

Silver Age (1956-69)

Across the board (and with very few exceptions), Silver Age is fairly slow in FN/VF and lower grade. This is nothing new, and has been going on for years. The good news is that the new Overstreet update (1) corrected the point spread on GD and FN, going from 1-3-7 to 1-3-10, and (2) dropped many of the prices of common issues. As a result, Overstreet now correctly reflects the market, in which dealers have been selling Silver at 50% off Guide for years. Many people swear by the guide when valuing books, so it's great that its prices are now indicative of what stuff is selling for.

High grade Silver is still doing very well, and always will, because that's the investment market. While not setting any new records, early Silver in high grade still brings at least guide in most cases. This is the sign of a healthy market.

Sales: Our Army at War #81 FA $150; #83 VG/FN $400; GI Combat #68 VG/FN $300; Action #252 GD+ $150; Adventure #210 GD+ $300; Detective #233 VG $125; Mystery in Space #53 FA $75; Superman #100 VG $275; Lois Lane #1 FR $150; Wonder Woman #105 FR/GD $100; Spider-Man #1 FR $400; Fantastic Four #6 VG $150; #7 VG $125; #10 FR $30.

Atomic Age (1946-56)

1950's comics will always be hot in one area or another, because it's so diverse. It's a shame the Code killed what was (and might always be) what I believe is the most creative period of comic history. Funny animal, teen humor, superhero, horror, sci-fi, jungle, crime, western, romance, sports, you name it, it was on the stands. So, what's hot? Horror and Crime genres lead the way. Archie is also doing fairly well, as well as comics by L.B. Cole, Baker (good girl comics), and Bernard Baily (horror). Basically, if it's rare, and/or if the cover and art stands out in a particular way, you can bet it's a good buy.

Sales: Hoot Gibson (Fox Giant) #nn GD/VG $60; Blue Bolt V6/#4 (not pictured in journals) VG+ $75; Jon Juan one shot GD $45; Captain Aero #26 VG $300; Contact #12 FR/GD $100

Pre Golden/Golden Age (1933-45)

This is the most interesting period right now,

Continued from page 73

because it's just coming off of an incredible boom the last couple of years. Prices became "ridiculous" during 1995, with almost every type of Golden Age book selling for over Guide. In my opinion, the market evaporated a little quicker than everyone expected. Now, the main thing that sells a GA comic is its cover. For example, Superman #14 and #24 still sell briskly, while the other numbers sit longer on the display racks. And so on.

There seems to be a ceiling to what most collectors are willing to pay for one book. Any comic priced over $1,000 seems to take much longer to sell here, and usually only with a discount. Lower grades, because they're affordable, are very brisk sellers here, as well as VF-NM copies. The FN range Golden Age sells more slowly because of it's higher price (but not considered "high grade"). One dealer who recently put out his monster catalog said he sold mostly $100-400 comics. The comics that sold for more were either very rare, very high grade, or key issues. There may eventually be an increase in the point spread for Golden Age as well, depending on how much higher the NM values go over the next couple of years. (The editor of this magazine predicts that very scenario.)

From my point of view, the best thing to do is to buy what you like. If you're primarily a collector, stick with buying comics in the GD to FN range (depending on affordability). I strongly recommend the Gerber Photo-Journals, a two-volume set featuring the covers of practically every book from 1933 to the early 1950s. It's an invaluable aid when creating a want list of comics from the Golden Age. Since many collectors buy GA by the cover, the Photo-Journals are the perfect reference tool. But if you buy what you like, you can't go wrong. Unlike new comics, there's very little "crap" you can end up with that has little resale value. Although there are no guarantees, it seems pretty likely that any GA purchase is a pretty sound investment

Sales: Weird #1 VG/FN restored $375; Wow #11 VG $55; Flame #4 VG+ $150; Zip #3 GD $85; Mystery Men #6 FR $80; Fighting Yank #20 VG+ $75; Zip #26 FN+ $125; Marvel Mystery #5 appVF restored $2,500; Captain Marvel Jr. #4 $300; Whiz #3 GD/VG $350; Mystery Men #8 GD $200; Adventure #19 GD $275 cash, $100 in trade.

"Spokane Collection" Found!

In Spokane, Washington, it was discovered that a man in his seventies had amassed a collection of comic books from the mid '40s to the mid '50s. He even built a refrigerated steel meat locker in his basement to store the books.

Recently, the man contacted friends who had experience with the comic collecting hobby and asked for their assistance in selling the collection. He knew his comic books had value but not until his collector friends appraised the collection did he realize the high value of his holdings.

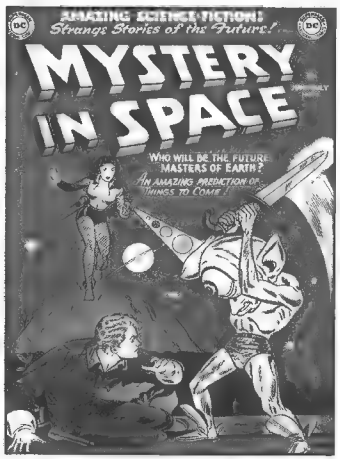
The next task was how to sell the collection. The high value precluded the local comic shop from buying it and so the material was purchased by Vincent Zurzolo, Jr. (Vincent's Collectibles) and Stephen Fishler (Metropolis Collectibles).

"After more than a month of telephone negotiations and a day of viewing the collection we were able to come to a price in six figures that satisfied both parties" according to Zurzolo. This collection consists of 800 books in genuinely high grade and is notable because of the "snow white" pages and glossy covers. Fishler said, "There are many books in the collection that I have never had above a VG... and here they are in NM with white pages—incredible!"

The collection was premiered at the Big Apple Comic Convention on February 14 to over 1,800 collectors in attendance. Many collectors from all over the country have suggested that in most instances the quality of the material meets or exceeds the White Mountain Collection in both gloss and page whiteness.

The runs include, Batman, Detective, Strange Adventures, Mystery in Space, Worlds of Fear, Eerie, Blue Bolt Weird Tales, Avon one-shots, ECs, Atlas horror titles and a tremendous amount of esoteric horror and science fiction titles.

Spokane copy of Myst. In Space #8.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Detroit gears up for Motor City Con

The annual Motor City Comic Con will be held in Southfield, Michigan on

May 15-17. The Comic Con is the largest comic book and collectibles convention in Michigan and the third largest in the United States.

Over 12,000 comic fans and 75 leading comics publishers are expected to attend the event. In addition, 400 comic creators will be at the convention, including such Golden Age and Silver Age fan favorites as: Will Eisner (Fri & Sat only), Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane, Julius Schwartz, Joe Giella, Sheldon Moldoff, Bernie Wrightson, Greg & Tim Hildebrandt, R.C. Harvey, Jim Silke and William Stout, along with some of today's top talent: Dan Brereton, Dave Dorman, John Estes, Glenn Fabry, Tony Harris, Kelley Jones, Joe Jusko, Angel Medina, James O'Barr, P. Craig Russell, Matt Wagner and Mike Wieringo.

Also attending the event are TV and movie actors and actresses such as: Star War's Trilogy cast members, Jeremy Bulloch (a.k.a. Boba Fett), Caroline Blakiston (Mon Mothma), John Hollis (Lobot), Phil Brown (Uncle Owen), also Grace Lee Whitney from Star Trek, Yvonne Craig (Batman's Batgirl), Jeff Conaway, James Hong, Richard Hatch, Anne Lockhart, Herb Jefferson Jr., Tim Thomerson, Tom Savini, several Scream Queens and even two pro wrestlers, George "The Animal" Steele and Sgt. (Commissioner) Slaughter.

"What sets us apart," Motor City Comic Con organizer Michael Goldman said, "is that we're an old fashioned, family run, family-oriented show with plenty to do and see for the whole family. Children and adults of all ages will find something to enjoy at the con."

The three day event will include seminars, signings, animation, trivia contests, sneak previews, art contests, auctions and parties for adults and children alike, not to mention tons of free giveaways for everyone.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the Motor City Comic Con has scheduled several charity events, including their Fourth Annual Red Cross Blood Drive and Seventh Annual Charity Art Auction of comic books and original art, for the benefit of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. According to Mr. Goldman, the charity grand total raised to date is nearly $35,000 for MDA. They hope to raise even more this year.

Tickets to the con are $12 per day or $28 for a three day pass. Hours of the convention are 1 PM to 8 PM on Friday, March 24; 10 AM to 7 PM on Saturday, March 25; and 10 AM to 5 PM on Sunday, March 26. Advance tickets are available from TicketMaster outlets or by calling (810) 645-6666.

The convention is being held at the Novi Expo Center, 43700 Expo Center Drive, (I-96 at exit #162), Novi, MI 48375. For more details or information, contact (248) 426-8059.

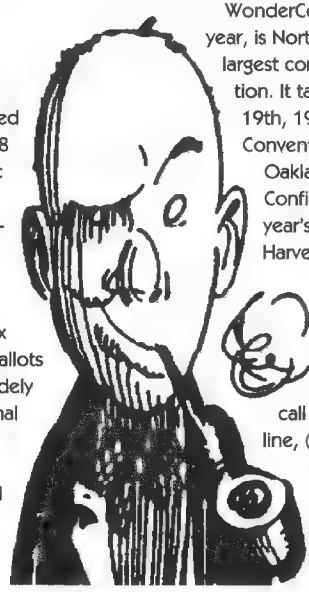
1998 Harvey Nominations Announced

The San Francisco area's WonderCon has announced the nominees for the 1998 Harvey Awards, the comic book industry's only award voted on exclusively by comic book creators.

According to Harvey Awards Administrator Alex Amado, the nominating ballots were distributed more widely throughout the professional community than ever before, with more than 3,000 ballots printed, and hundreds returned.

Because the awards are "by and for" the comic creative community, it is the comics pros who determine the rules of the awards. This year, that power was exercised when a referendum vote was cast in favor of changing several categories to recognize creators for their body of work over the previous year, as opposed to a single work or series. The categories affected by this change were: Best Writer, Best Artist, Best Cartoonist, Best Inker, Best Letterer, Best Colorist, and Best Cover Artist. Some of this year's special nominees include: Reed Crandall and Gardner F. Fox. (Jack Kirby Hall of Fame, Retroactive); Carmine Infantino and Murphy Anderson (Jack Kirby Hall of Fame, Lifetime Achievement); and Milo Manara (Jack Kirby Hall of Fame, International).

The Harveys are named in honor of cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman, whose life and career exemplified excellence in the comics medium. The Harvey Award presentation ceremony will take place on the first night of WonderCon, April 17, 1998, in the Calvin Simmons Ballroom of the Oakland Marriott.



WonderCon, now in its twelfth year, is Northern California's largest comic book convention. It takes place April 17-19th, 1998, at the Oakland Convention Center and Oakland Marriott. Confirmed guests for this year's show include Harvey Award nominees Sergio Aragones, Mark Waid, Kurt Busiek, and Matt Wagner. For general information, call the WonderCon hotline, (510) 464-1120 or access the WonderCon Website at: www.wondercon .com

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Continued from page 7

Some Flack

Thank the fates that you had the guts to reprint the Adams piece! I've seen dealers gouging CBM collectors for as much as $50 a pop for issue #40. I saw in the last letter col that you are getting some flack but I want you to know that I thought it was a great idea to stop the rip off… CBM #40 is one of my all time favorite issues, but it is not worth $50!!! That's crazy. Also pairing it with the O'Neil article was brilliant. Once again CBM and you have cast your lot with real collectors! Thanks.

Alvin S. Zumwalt, California

Double Sigh…

Reprints, reprints

As a regular reader of your excellent publication, I look forward to it each month. On the few occasions when you have reprinted an article from CBM's original run (such as with the DC Fawcett lawsuit article, or the Star Spangled Robin issues article) I have not minded, since in these cases the article was usually short, and the first run of CBM is very hard to come by.

However, your current reprinting of the entire Neal Adams DC Years interview bothers me. Excellent though it is, it was originally published only a year ago, and takes up most of the issue. Even if (and I doubt this) a LARGE percentage of CBM's audience was not around a year ago, and even if this issue is no longer available as a back issue, if there is really sufficient "popular demand" for the interview, you should go back to press with the original issue. As it is, I feel like I paid $5 for about 12 new pages of CBM this month. Please try and limit recent reprints in the future.

This complaint aside, I thoroughly enjoy your mag, particularly the column by Michelle Nolan.

Dave Schmidt, via Email

Marginalized backgrounds

Was just curious about your article submission process. Along with this I was wondering (if you do solicit articles… or accept unsolicited articles for review) what the process might be if one were interested in working on an article for your publication. I have been heartened by the increase in interest in Silver Age comics in the pages of your magazine… I find that, while I am interested in Golden Age studies, the '60-'70s era books are much more suited to my personal aesthetic and economic reality. I am curious if there would be any interest in an article that examined some of the comics that were introduced during the silver-age that dealt with characters/heroes from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds. Specifically as a collector and student, I am interested in the handful of black heroes/heroines that had relatively short run titles (i.e. Black Goliath, Luke Cage, Black Lightning, etc.) that were met with varied popularity. These titles can be found in high grades for amazingly low prices and I feel may have great merit for collectors for several reasons. On a purely historical level this offshoot genre is interesting as a commentary on the shifting social awareness of the time and comicdoms attempt to address those issues and lure new readers. Also, the current lack of financial collectibility of these titles may prove to be short lived as we witness a continued pop-culture fascination/retro-commodification of all things that the youth of today see's as 60's-70's kitsch culture. As the blaxploitation boom continues to look for new "ultra-hip" product, can Black Goliath #1 remain ignored?

Well, enough time on my particular soapbox. I would also like to offer you high praise on your magazine... I have been looking for a serious publication like this for years. Each month is a new delight of collectible info far removed from the detestable land of 90's variant cover ethos that I feared would forever drain the soul from the comic community. CBM is the cure for the stigma of "the ignurant (sic) comic collector" that the soul-less "speculation" (CBM 54) of the mid '80s-'90s seemed intent on cementing. So let's keep it academic. Keep up the good work. Oh yes, did we really need the hallowed reputation of the name Overstreet undermined by the suspiciously motivated variant covers of the latest Price Guide (sorry I had to ask, but I feel like I have just brashly questioned one of my Gods).

Patrick A. Tackett, via Email

Archie's Mechanics

Read your articles on the Archie Series. You have no mention of the Archies Mechanics in there. I have recently come into possession of a comic book called Archies Mechanics Vol 1 #1 dated September 1954. Could you please give me more info on this series or let me know where I can find out more about this series. I did find the information on the series you wrote about very interesting. As I am not a collector this has made me want to be.

Cathy Prock, via Email

The series that you refer to is one of the scarcer Archie titles and was published in 1954-55. It is interesting for several reasons, including the fact that the first issue was 15¢ (ensuring that it would not sell) and that the price was reduced to 10¢ for the last two issues. Not only that, but the first two issues were pre-Code, and the last post-Code. Finally, the first issue was a 52-pager, with issues 2 and 3 having a standard page count. All these anomalies plus its scarcity, make this title very interesting and quite collectible. At the last San Diego Con, I saw a true NM copy of #1 sell for $950, well above Guide. A year ago, a VF+ copy of #2 and a VF copy of #3 sold for 3X Guide (1996 book). For more info, ask your local comic shop to show you the listing in their copy of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #27. Thanks for writing and good luck with your quest.

Overlooked milestone

Enjoyed your most recent issue of CBM. The short article about Neal Adams and coloring at DC in the 1960s was particularly interesting. Regarding your article about the start of the Bronze Age, I think Kirby's departure from Marvel also has to be considered. For me, even as an 11 year old kid, this marked the end of an era at Marvel Comics. This change also brought a new direction for DC comics which is being felt even today. Content-wise I think that Roy Thomas' and Barry Smith's Conan #1 also highlighted the way '70's comics would go, exploring different genres. I believe this book is highly overlooked right now as a milestone. It marked a significant turning point editorially at Marvel. Thanks for the great reading every month.

Bill Mitchell, New Hampshire

Number 3

Oh dear, this is not good. How could you do this? When it comes to great comics teams, O'Neil and Adams is one of the best. There is no doubt in my mind. It would seem that teaming them up in an issue of CBM would be a natural, right? Not when the Adams piece is a very recent reprint. I realize that a lot of people may have asked for it, as it is proclaimed on your cover, but it's a big disappointment to those of us who have been reading the magazine more than a few months to get such a sizable reprint jammed in the middle of a new issue. Isn't there a way you could reprint this material in a separate publication, such as an annual, or a special, that would allow us, who have it already, not to spend the price for a complete issue and only getting partial use of it?

Or was this a case of having a theme, but someone getting jinxed by the dreaded deadline doom and not finishing a piece? In either case, could you please abstain from printing the reprints in the regular issues and keep them to specials or annuals? CBM is the perfect magazine for collections of articles. I'd buy a book of Michelle Nolan's columns alone!

Otherwise, I love CBM! When it comes to general comics magazines (and not specialty ones like the Jack Kirby collector, which concentrate on a much more focused area of comics) and periodicals, it's number 3 on my must buy list, along with The Comic Buyer's Guide, Wizard, and the Comic's Journal. Keep up the great work.

Mike Leuszler, via Email

On target

Congratulations on a job well done on The Guide that was shipped with CBM #54. While I was a bit disappointed that no Golden Age comics were listed, I got over it when I saw the value adjustments that Overstreet made. I must say that you were right on target this time, and the prices that you changed are truly an accurate reflection of the market, at least in my area, and in most mail-order ads that I have seen in the last year or so. The price spreads between grades is also an issue that has needed attention for quite some time, and this just reinforces the need for a three-price, multiple grade listing for those who publish price guide updates, monthly or otherwise.

I was quite curious as to how most dealers would respond to the price adjustments, and have inquired with several in the central Texas area. Many bought books based on much higher guide prices, and are therefore not prepared to lower prices yet, at least on key books, high grade or otherwise. Also, most middle and lower grade books were already discounted to sell anyway, so many 50 and 75 percent off sales will just be "Guide" priced, or the discount will be reduced. It will be interesting to see if there will be further price resistance, as many collectors became quite accustomed to these large discounts. Hopefully, prices will stabilize at a steady "Guide" price after your next annual Guide comes out, and everyone can find a common ground in regard to book value and price.

In the meantime, I'll have great fun referring to "the Guide" when haggling at the next few shows that I attend, and looking forward to April's "Big Book"!

Mark Zylberfuden, Texas

Danger Trail

I have been reading CBM for quite sometime. It never fails to impress me. I learn so much about our hobby. I never miss an issue. I get my CBM every month from Adventure Comics (hi John and Joe). I read it from cover to cover. It is a wonderful publication.

Issue #56 was no exception. The Shadow coverage was wonderful. I always enjoy Michelle Nolan's notebook. As always very informative. I was hoping she would tell us about "Danger Trail." I never understood why it was canceled. I have only one issue, and that is #4 in fair. But, I really enjoyed the adventures of King Faraday.

In this issue you have reinforced the fact that Neal Adams is a true craftsman. He set a standard that a few have reached. Thank you for CBM!!!

Steve Ogden, Maryland

About "More Alan Light Info"

About "More Alan Light Info" (CBM #51)—I would like to give more information. I'm certain there are more Flashback -2 series, after #28. In minimum—9. I have six of them. For Petrie's records, they are:

29 - Captain America #2
31 - Hit Comics #1
32 - America's Greatest Comics #7
33 - Plastic Man #2 (Gay '90s Nightmare)
34 - Ibis the Invincible #1
37 - Captain Midnight #1

I have one "Special Edition Series" (no number, I suppose 3) that reprints all the Captain Marvel Jr. from Master Comics #27 through #42 (Mac Raboy's art).

I would like to see more Comic Conservation and Restoration columns.

Keep up your fantastic work.

Walter de Carmo, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Almost like a book

Wanted to write and let you know that the last few issues of CBM have been exceptional. I have some background in magazine publishing and it's hard to to believe that you could keep up the enormous amount of editorial material that you publish every month. Each issue is almost like a book... and clearly a "must have" source of info for serious collectors. Both my brother and I think you're putting out the best best fanzine ever, and you deserve some kind of an award (if they have them for comic fan magazines). Best wishes and keep up the good work. CBM is the absolute highlight of my month!

William Andersen, Wisconsin

A question of value

I have a collection of comics from the mid to late '50s. I have 5 that are Superman and 100 that are romance issues. I am wondering how I would find out their value. Can you offer any suggestion? Thanks.

John Leighton, via Email

Consult the latest Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide (#27) and/or consult with your local comic shop proprietor. If you're planning to sell, be sure to contact more than one dealer for a bid. Good luck!

Oh So!

As always, a great job covering our multi-faceted hobby. Especially liked the Captain Marvel Jr. cover to #55 (kudos to Lisa!)....however, within the pages of that very issue, I must take exception to a statement which appeared in Michelle Nolan's article covering "Romance Mysteries." In her article she states "Love Classics #2 has what at the time was one of the longest single stories ever presented in comics—a 30-page epic entitled 'I Was A Small Town Flirt.'"

Oh, so! What about such stories as "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" (Four Color #9-1942-64 pages); Donald Duck in "The Old Castle's Secret"(Four Color #189-1948-32 pages) and Donald Duck in "Lost in the Andes" (Four Color #223-1949-32 pages). When you're blinded by love (and romance stories) anything can happen!

While I always enjoy the historical background stories that occur in CBM, I would like to see more features covering some of today's "hot topics" Bill Jenks' "Investing in EC" article was an excellent example of a carefully researched and thought out piece. What about covering topics such as 1)Restoration; 2) Storage of your comics; 3) Insuring your collection and 4) Grading. Keep up the good work!

Don McPato, California

All Top #6

I'm writing to let you know how much I enjoy your magazine. A great addition to the collectors' tools. I enjoy the diverse articles and would like to see more about the titles from '30s. So little information has been seen about these books. I have also found a few books from the '50s that you might be interested in. The first is an issue of All Top #6. This is not the reprint which I saw at the same store. It does exist and should be a part of everyones' All Top collection. The other book is Charlie Chan #6. It is listed as rare in the Gerber guide but is most interesting because of the Simon and Kirby cover that is so much like Thrills of Tomorrow #19. The motorcycle is very similar. Great action covers. I hope you have a long run with your magazine.

Bruce Mason, Pennsylvania

Although I'm an avid collector of DC's The New Adventures Of Charlie Chan, I'd have to say that I don't feel that #6 is rare, except perhaps in extremely high grade (what isn't?) ...

Shadow Part One?

Really enjoyed the article on The Shadow in CBM #56. Which issue carried part one and is it still available?

Philip Traum, via Email

CBM #28...and, regrettably we are completely sold out.

Unkind and Rude

The letter from tenth grader Mark Baumbergerin your recent letters page was amazing in that it was so truly unkind and rude. But what really set your magazine (and editorial style) apart from the rest was your response to it. I was impressed at your polite and even encouraginging response, and I would think that few editors would have even printed it, much less answer it without putting it down or ripping it apart... which Mark gave you plenty of room to do. (It also says a lot about the honesty and integrity of your letter column.)

Perhaps the young man's real punishment will come with about ten more years of maturity when he looks back at his less than kind letter in print for all to see. The very reason I buy CBM is because it is not like the Wizard! Thanks for the a great magazine. Best wishes and continued success.

PS. Thanks for reprinting the Adams article in #56. A collector I know tried to sell me a copy of CBM #40 for $75. Are you kidding?

Tom Wilder, Utah

Pulpbook Marketplace?

Just wanted to pat your staff on the back and tell you what a wonderful job you are doing each month. I read CBM the minute I walk in the door each time it arrives. I have been a subscriber for over a year now and I learn something new with each magazine I read.

Mark B. a tenth grader from New York wrote in and commented on the fact that CBM mostly talks about older books and I just wanted to say that is fine by me! He should stick to Wizard which caters to juvenile readers. That is one reason I stopped reading Wizard and the fact that I had discovered your fine publication.

I do not have anything against Wizard, they keep younger people interested in this hobby. Everybody has different taste and when you mature so does your taste. I hope that when Mark matures CBM will still be around for him to enjoy!

I love Golden and Silver Age comics and have recently added pulps to my want list. Please continue with your articles on pulps.Those of you who have not yet tried pulps please do, you will not be disappointed and, if you are, at least you have learned they are not your cup of tea. How about PULPBOOK MARKETPLACE ? Thank you for the super articles and great color covers.

Chris Ticknor, Ohio

Real Smart

As a Trojan/Culture pulp collector, I enjoyed Will Murray's detailed history of the Donenfeld/Armer empire in CBM #53. I would like his opinion on whether Real Smart was part of their empire early on. It differs from Bedtime Stories, Pep, etc. in that it does not contain pages of nude women, even though the type of stories seems similar. It does contain a picture of Robert L. Bellem, the only one that I have seen. Was Crown Publishers, Wilmington, Delaware another branch, like Merwil?

Also, can you name the last Trojan/Culture pulp, title and date? I believe it is Crime Fiction Stories, Dec. 1950, a one shot. Write in Will and tell us all if you agree.

Alfred Jan, California

Refreshingly Candid

Well, it took some time, but I'm finally dropping you a line. CBM continually amazes me. I re-subscribed starting with #50, or thereabouts (after having mourned the death of the first CBM series five years ago), and I must say you all are doing a superb job. The Denny O'Neil profile in the Feb. issue was refreshingly candid, and Todd Severin's Shadow Part II piece connected a lot of unrelated dots in my mind. I, too, am a great fan of the O'Neil/Kaluta version; the fact it was set in the 1930s was one of its strengths. Bringing it into the 1970s would have resulted in the loss of that wonderful depression-era texture that defined the look of the Shadow's world. I'm glad O'Neil stood his ground on that point with DC.

Congratulations to Lisa, for creating a clean, excellent look in CBM. Your column and depart-

ment pages, in particular (Pat Calhoun, Michelle Nolan, etc.) are terrific.

By the way, please don't let Michelle Nolan ever get away. Her articles are solid gold... she actually had me reading about romance comics. How she did this is a mystery to me.

Have you all done anything on The Doom Patrol? Seems to me a lot of collectors would enjoy an account of how that book came to be. I've been a DP collector for 15 years, and I've always loved the book. How about a Doom Patrol Article? Whaddaya think?

Doug Kelly, via Email

I nominate you for this writing assignment! I wonder if CBM readers know that Doug is the author of The Die Cast Price Guide, which hit store shelves last Spring. It's become the standard reference for collectors of die cast cars and trucks. Doug also writes features and departments for magazines like Collecting Toys, Mobilia and Toy Trader.

Original CBM

Your magazine is one of the pleasures I most look forward to each month. I have nearly all of the issues from #22 to the present, but have managed to find only one of the original run at an affordable price. Is there any chance that you may be considering a reprint volume (or two - whatever it would take) to make the articles from that first run available?

I'm sure there are many fans like me who would jump at the chance to read those earlier gems. No matter what you decide about reprints, at least I have the present incarnation of Comic Book Marketplace to keep my brain full.

Morris Berndt, Iowa

Many of the old CBMs (#1-21) can be had for $5-15 each, depending on condition. As for reprints, I've been feeling a little shy about them lately (sigh), as you can imagine.

Bite of Monsters

Found a paperback book at a used bookstore a few weeks ago titled The Bite of Monsters by Dennis O'Neil. It's a Belmont paperback that came out in June of 1971. I believe this is the same O'Neil who has done lots and lots of comics. Did you know that he was a published author back then? I didn't. But I think that this is one and the same. It's a science fiction novel. There's a blurb on the cover that says, "Snakelike aliens ruled the Earth. Only one man had the guts to fight back."

Steve Fears, Oklahoma

Vitriolic Letter

Thank you for running CBM #57 with my all-time favorite Legion of Super Heroes! (Please feature more!)

I would like to commend Ye Editor for his courage in printing the vitriolic letter by Mark Baumberger in CBM #57. Mark went on about many older comic books as being stupid and dumb. I won't respond in kind by calling his taste in comics, dumb. I will say I wish Mark could buy comic books for 10¢ and 12¢ as many did in the "old days." I would also remind him that Overstreet Price Guides were the "granddaddies" that kept up fan interest and led to other price guides which Mark prefers. As for "dumb" comics, perhaps Mark has never read classics which helped young students read shortened versions of some of the great books in history. I think Mark needs to read "older" books like the first 20 Spider-Mans or the first 10 Fantastic Fours before he judges books simply on their age!

Us older fans kept the hobby (that Mark enjoys now) alive !

Richard M. Brown, Michigan

Curt Swan additions/corrections

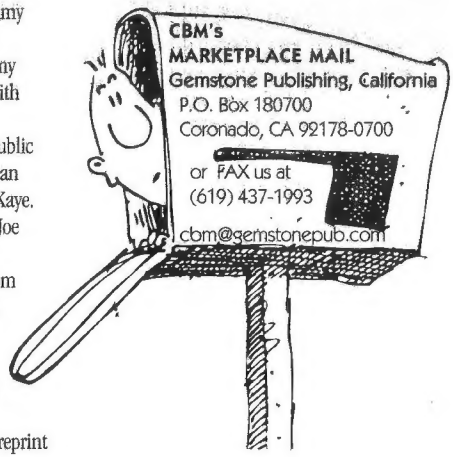
Just read the Curt Swan article in the latest CBM and I have a few additions/corrections for you:

- Additions: World's Finest #102-108 "Tommy Tomorrow" stories are probably by Curt Swan (p) and Fischetti (I). I have them all as ???... but they're possibilities.
- World's Finest #109 Tommy Tomorrow story IS pencilled by Swan with possible Fischetti inks.
- World's Finest #110 Tommy Tomorrow IS Swan and Kaye.
- World's Finest #111 Tommy Tomorrow IS Swan and (Kaye?)
- World's Finest #112-120 and #123 Tommy Tomorrows ARE by Swan and Kaye.
- World's Finest #156 has a reprint Tommy Tomorrow story from Action Comics with pencils by Swan (maybe inks, too).
- World's Finest #111 has a Superman Public Service announcement titled "Superman Says Lend a Friendly Hand" by Swan/Kaye.
- World's Finest #173 cover inks may be Joe Giella.
- World's Finest #116 story "Creature From Beyond" (Bats & Supes) by Swan and Kaye.
- World's Finest #117 story "Super-Batwoman and the Super-Creature" is by Swan and Kaye.
- World's Finest #141 has a "Lois Lane" reprint from Lois Lane #29 with Swan and Kaye art.
- World's Finest #154 cover layouts by Cary Bates.
- Corrections: World's Finest #124 cover and story feature Jim Mooney (p) Kaye (i).
- World's Finest #141 cover by Swan and Kaye.
- World's Finest #142, 146, 147, 148 & 149 stories all have George Klein (I)
- World's Finest #21 story of Boy Commandos by Swan/Brodie.
- World's Finest #29 story of Boy Commandos by Swan/Klein.
- World's Finest #31 story of Boy Commandos by Swan/(inks?)
- World's Finest #33,34,34,37,38 story of Boy Commandos has probable Klein inks.
- World's Finest #72 Stan Kaye inked to the story (who the heck is "CP" you listed?)
- World's Finest #101 Kaye inks
- World's Finest #102-103 Kaye inks
- World's Finest #110,111,115-116 John Mooney inks
- Batman #70 Charles Paris inks

Note: Shelly Moldoff, to my knowledge, NEVER inked Swan's stuff in World's Finest! NEVER! HE TOLD ME SO!

Craig Delich, Kansas

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications and include your telephone number to:



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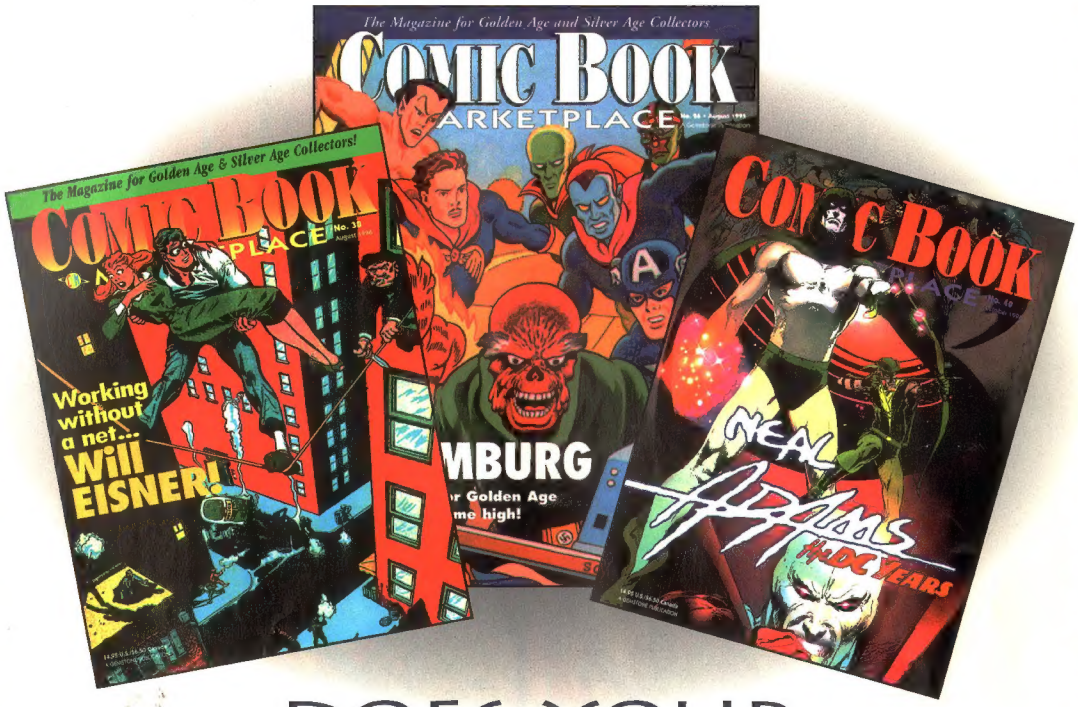

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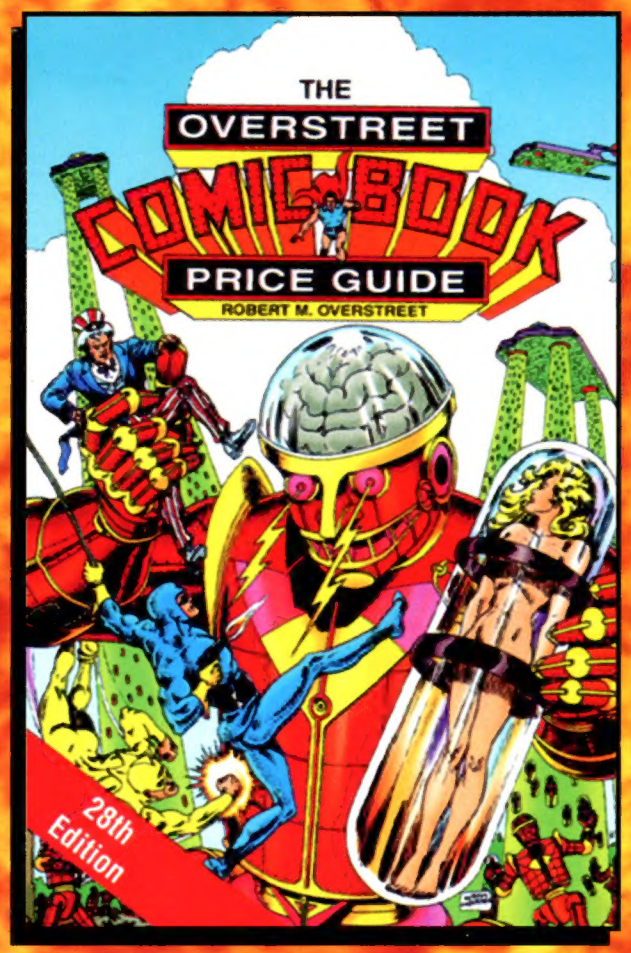

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